BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND SENIORS THROUGH AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPPROACH

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ABSTRACT

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by
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The project is the Prime Seniors Tuesday Program at the Salvation Army (SA) in Dayton, Ohio. The problem context is the seniors' lack of knowledge of how to deepen their relationship with God. The hypothesis is that if the seniors participate in a seven-week training program, then they will be equipped to deepen their relationship with God, and resilience, underscoring their value and integral role in the project. This qualitative study will utilize a narrative approach conducted during seven weeks of hourly sessions. Data collection included pre- and post-project surveys, group discussions, focused journaling, testimonies, and individual interviews.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this project is a testament not only to my effort but to the incredible grace and support poured into me by a few extraordinary people. To them, I offer my deepest gratitude. My heart is particularly full for my mentors: Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Dr. Robert Walker, Sr., Rev. Dr. Brenda Braam, and my faculty consultant, Rev. Dr. Tolly Kennon, III. Your wealth of knowledge was a compass, and your constant encouragement was an anchor. You did more than guide my research—you helped me find my voice, confront my doubts, and deepen the realization of my walk with God and the strength of my faith. I also extend special thanks to Dr. Eshakhia Sobukwe for her unwavering faith and kindness in supporting me through Zoom meetings, sitting at the library, and serving as a mentor.

From the day I entered the Doctrine of Ministry program, which felt like the true start of my ministry, everyone collective insight, support, and profound encouragement have been a powerful motivation, pushing me to pursue excellence in all things. I offer my deepest thanks to all project participants—including Dr. Teresa Q. Johnson, Dr. Carolyn Banks, Ms. Brenda Middleton, Pastor Emma and Douglas Blacknell, Billy Mayfield, Pastor Darice Jackson, Mr. David Greer, and countless others—for their unwavering support and continuous encouragement, which served as a source of inspiration. A special thank you also goes to my friend, Ms. Valerie Brown, and William Lane, and my sister-in-law, Mel, as well as my colleagues: Dr. Eshakhia Sobukwe,

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With gratitude and meekness, I thank my adult kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews, siblings, my friend brother Ernest, the late Charles Jones, and the Church family of the Salvation Army and coworkers, the social community support meetings, who understood and supported me throughout my project. It is easy to see how much they care about the people we serve. I am grateful to be one of you, and all praises due to the Highest. Each of you gave me the time to complete the Doctrine of Ministry project titled, “Building a Relationship with God and Seniors Through an Interdisciplinary Approach,” without reluctance, moving up to understand the needs of the seniors. All I can say is, Maya Angelou’s powerful quote, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people

will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."[1] Last but not least, I like to thank God for his grace and mercy and everlasting love for me.

[1] Maya Angelou, *The Complete Poetry* (New York, NY: Random House, 2015), 11.

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this entire project, "Building a Relationship with God and Seniors Through an Interdisciplinary Approach," to the everlasting memory of my dear parents (deceased), Mr. Jessie (Pa J) Finney and my mother, Mamie Lee Early, Howard, Finney. Their lives were a continuous sermon on the importance of grounding one's existence in enduring principles—specifically, the critical need for staying focused and keeping God first**.** Their unwavering commitment to these two tenets provided the foundational blueprint not just for our family, but for the very purpose and methodology of this work.

The depth of their divine connection remains an inspiring testament. All praises are due to God for orchestrating the union that resulted in this writer and her seven siblings. It is remarkable and deeply moving that what God brought together, my parents remained: the best of friends until the very end, transitioning to eternal rest only three weeks apart. This synchronization speaks volumes about the covenant they shared and the peaceful, harmonious legacy my parents left behind. You all diligently trained us in the way we should go, instilling discipline and spiritual truth during our formative years, and granting us the necessary freedom to navigate our own paths once we became adults. This early training provided the moral compass that prevents straying and is, in itself, the first interdisciplinary lesson—combining spiritual guidance with practical life skills.

Beyond the immediate family, my parents' love extended as a boundless, welcoming harbor. They were ceaselessly present for the extended family, including the grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. My parents' generosity of spirit and willingness to open their hearts and home to whomever they encountered was a profound, visible manifestation of being in the Will of God. This unconditional, relational love is the very essence I seek to replicate in this project—a commitment to recognizing and cherishing the inherent worth of every individual, particularly our seniors, and serving them with a spirit of humility and dedication. My parents' example cemented the practical application of faith through works.

It is my parents' morals and values, forged through hard work and steadfast faith, that have strengthened my personal journey to God. They have not only guided me through trials but have helped me grow into the focused, determined, and compassionate woman I am today. The values of integrity, perseverance, community responsibility, and reliance on divine wisdom are the cornerstones of my identity, and consequently, they form the philosophical framework upon which this entire interdisciplinary project rests. My parents' life was the curriculum, and the resulting project is a practical final exam proving the lessons were learned.

My dedication continues to my great ancestors, Gramps and Rye Finney**,** who paved the way for the spiritual awareness in our lineage. Thank you, Rye, for giving me your God—the concept, the structure, the tradition—until I was able to encounter and embrace a God of my own understanding, whom I choose to call Jesus Christ. This handover of faith, from historical tradition to personal, active conviction, illustrates the

intergenerational transfer of spiritual capital, a process this project seeks to facilitate within the senior community.

Therefore, this dedication is more than a formality; it is an affirmation of the foundational sources of my strength and purpose. Your love, sacrifice, and unwavering faith continue to sustain me daily. This project is a living tribute, a way to pay forward the immense spiritual and moral inheritance you bestowed upon me. Thank you for the indelible impact of your lives. All glory and honor be to God for your example. May your names and spirits forever resonate in the work dedicated to service and faith.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Alcoholic Anonymous
BLT	Black Liberation Theology
EGAR	Empowerment for Growth and Reconstruction , Inc.
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
NRSVA	New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha
NSDUH	National Survey on Drug Use and Health
PSTP	Prime Senior Tuesday Program
SA	Salvation Army
SUD	Substance Use Disorder

s

EPIGRAPH

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

—Maya Angelou, *The Complete Poetry*

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the project is to build a relationship with God and seniors through an interdisciplinary approach that inspires you by emphasizing the importance of spiritual connection for seniors' well-being and engagement, and shows how your involvement can make a meaningful difference. This shared faith underscores our collective purpose and invites you to join a compassionate community. By creating a bridge that transfers significance from their own lives into a faith-centered space, the program offers training rooted in spiritual principles. Its foundation in faith-based recovery creates a safe environment for seniors to share struggles and seek prayer, aligning with our shared faith interests.

This model is not meant to replace professional therapy but offers a faith-based educational pathway for seniors to experience spiritual awakening and divine intervention. The seven-week program will explore biblical themes, including Psalm 27:1-14, along with historical perspectives on mental illness and women's rights in the 1900s, all within an interdisciplinary framework. Each week will focus on a specific foundation, providing participants with a clear understanding and gradual immersion into the faith-based, Twelve-Step approach, a proven method in faith recovery programs that underpins this project. We will leverage the existing, highly attended Prime Senior Tuesday program at the Salvation Army—a resource already serving seniors across

several areas, including Springfield and West Carrollton, Ohio—to maximize our reach and impact.

My sincere gratitude goes to my professional associates whose expertise has been invaluable. I look forward to continued collaboration and invite you to join in making a positive impact through this project, trusting your insights to shape my approach. As I shared my life experiences and struggles, the theme for this doctoral project began to emerge, inspiring us all to work together for community transformation.

Chapter One, Ministry Focus, is the spiritual autobiography that intersects with this project's context and content, and with the Synergy. Content (information) is shared through various media, such as articles, presentations, personal testimonies, and discussions, while context helps to clarify its meaning and relevance. Understanding both is essential for effective communication and engagement. My journey toward the kingdom of God became my reason for living. The Salvation Army is where I built my relationship with God and found happiness, joy, and peace. I view my role not just as a set of duties, but as a genuine calling. This ministry extends into every small interaction. Ministering is simply about bringing kindness, respect, and presence to others, making a meaningful and necessary difference every day.

Chapter Two is the Biblical Foundations Chapter, which is grounded in Psalm 27:1-14. The scripture teaches us to find strength, confidence, and trust in God's protection and guidance amid mayhem and doubt. King David's enemies are out to harm him. Despite the challenges, David finds comfort and strength in his unwavering faith in God. Imagine David sitting in the darkness, while the candlelight cast a long shadow that dimly lit the room. David is feeling attacked on all sides, and the air is heavy. In this

moment of uncertainty, he finds strength in God's power to deliver him from his enemies, inspiring hope and trust in your hearts.

There are additional biblical passages that promote the concept of Psalms chapter twenty-seven. For example, Isaiah 41:10 underscores God's presence and support in times of fear, while Philippians 4:6-7 emphasizes the peace that comes from trusting in God. Matthew 6:33 supports with David's desire to prioritize seeking God's kingdom, promising provision for those who do so. These passages emphasize the importance of trust, prayer, and seeking God above all else, which is what this project characterizes.

Chapter Three, Historical Foundations, focuses on the Salvation Army, an evangelical part of the Universal Christian Church. William Booth's mission was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs without discrimination. He initially intended to evangelize the poor and working classes, and the movement evolved into a church when converts not affiliated with existing congregations made the mission their spiritual home for nurturing and fellowship. The Salvation Army began in 1991 when seeking help for "brokenness" and addiction, and later joined in 2011 after leaving a Baptist church that did not support women preachers. The organization has become a new family, providing support and rehabilitation. It remains committed to serving everyone in need, regardless of background, through programs such as addiction treatment and a senior citizens fellowship.

In addition, it is essential to address the clinical approach to mental health. From a medical point of view, history shows mental health treatment as a complex journey, tracing its roots from antiquity, where afflictions were attributed to demonic possession, leading to brutal practices such as trephining (drilling holes in the skull) and exorcism.

This early, non-scientific understanding gradually evolved, notably with the ancient Egyptians, who first documented the brain as the site of mental functions, and later with figures like Phillipe Pinel, who introduced “moral treatment” in the late 18th century, advocating kindness, patience, and humane conditions in asylums. This shift paved the way for modern psychological and pharmacological approaches, including Freud’s psychoanalysis and the development of psychotropic drugs, though controversial practices like the lobotomy marred the path. This historical context reveals a long-standing struggle with stigma and a lack of scientific insight, which continue to influence the accessibility and quality of care today.

Chapter Four, Theological Foundations, will celebrate The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program at the Dayton Salvation Army, which is a spiritual development initiative that emphasizes the transformative power of salvation for its senior members. The program, which includes Bible studies, prayer sessions, and community service, demonstrates the church’s respect for seniors by providing them with resources for deeper spiritual growth and a greater knowledge of God. In a theological context, salvation is more than mere forgiveness; it is a profound personal transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit, the divine agent of change. The program’s foundation is rooted in Soteriology (the study of salvation), which teaches that redemption is a gift from God received through faith, not by works, and is made possible through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

The Interdisciplinary Foundations, Chapter Five, of The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program at the Dayton Salvation Army is a vital initiative that uses a multidisciplinary approach to strengthen seniors’ relationships with God, focusing on their spiritual

development, personal growth, and overall well-being. This program continues the original mission of the Salvation Army's founders, William and Catherine Booth, to minister to people often excluded by traditional churches. Recognizing that seniors are a growing, highly religious population, the program uses religious coping strategies—such as prayer, scripture reading (e.g., Ps. 27:1-14), and community support—to help participants manage stress and social isolation. Crucially, the program also integrates psychological insights, including an understanding of how personality disorders can influence religious behavior, to prevent harmful religious patterns and foster a resilient, positive connection with God.

Project Analysis, Chapter Six, initiated by the author to overcome personal anxieties and a fear of public speaking, successfully implemented a seven-week interdisciplinary, faith-based Twelve-Step training program for seniors from the Salvation Army's Prime Seniors Tuesday Program, aiming to equip them with the tools to build a relationship with God. The project's methodology used pre- and post-questionnaires, guest speakers, and open discussions to evaluate the impact of the training, which covered biblical foundations (e.g., Ps. 27:1-14), historical context, theology, and the holistic support offered by secular disciplines such as social work. Driven by the author's own spiritual journey and professional background as a licensed counselor, social worker assistant, and evangelist chaplain, the program fostered a thriving fellowship among predominantly African American participants (77% female, 33% male), who found peace, spiritual awakening, and unity by sharing personal struggles and seeing their challenges validated within a larger faith and social justice narrative.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Family Background

As I ask God for guidance, I struggle to list the most significant moments of my life's journey. Throughout my life, I have experienced many deaths, losses, griefs, bouts of anxiety, and depression. I like to say I have loved and been loved by many and hated by few. It was when I became homicidal and suicidal that I began to see a light at the end of the tunnel. I thought to myself that I had tried everything, so why not try God? I remember thinking that God does not dwell in garbage, and the only way to see Him was to admit myself to the hospital, or I was going to kill myself. Asking for help and the support I needed was the most difficult time in my life. My family was severely dysfunctional and held secrets, and I had had enough of living a lie. It may be hard to believe, but during those times in my life, I felt the presence of God. Even though I did not understand God and would search for other answers that would change my life around, I decided to give God my all. Being self-centered, angry, and fearful, out of desperation, I sought help. After twenty-seven years of living in the darkness and being caught up in a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, I sought help. I finally found God in a little quiet space in my heart.

My father was born in Bolingbroke, Georgia, and my mom was born in Middletown, Ohio. When my mother was fourteen years old, her mom died, and she ran

away from home to Cleveland, Ohio, and eventually arrived in Georgia. Two years later, my mother was sixteen, pregnant, and met my father. My father says my mom told him that she was eighteen, and he married her to keep her child from being taken from her. My mother quit school in the ninth grade, and my father in the third. My father shared that he had to work in the fields. My parents moved to Detroit, Michigan, when the auto factories, Ford, Chrysler, and Cadillac, opened. People from the south started moving north at that time. My grandfather went first, and later my father joined in. By then, my parents had two children. My father said my grandfather was sometimes rough on him. He said his father told him one night to get up hours before daybreak to fix a fire, and he grew tired of the ill treatment. When my grandfather went to grab him, my father said he picked my grandfather off the ground and told him never to put his hands on him again. In Detroit, Michigan, my mother cleaned houses for a living, and my father worked on a garbage truck. I know today that I had the best parents in the world. They did the best they could with the circumstances laid before them. My father would say later in life that my mother did her thing, and he did his. My father was a gambler, and my mother was an alcoholic. I would later learn that my mother and father fought. I have never seen my father drink anything, not even water. I would later learn that his drink was instead fruit and vegetables.

My grandmother would keep her radio station on very low, listening to Martha Jean the Queen on a Black Gospel radio station in Detroit, Michigan, at the time. My grandmother would fuss at my grandfather and pray for him all the time because he would get drunk and speak harshly. He would fall drunk on the floor, and I would be confused about his behavior. My grandmother was a wonderful cook and taught us how

to make ice cream, clean chicken, pick greens, wash dishes, wash clothes, clean the house, and take care of ourselves. I remember we had to pick up my grandmother's medication because eventually she lost both of her legs to diabetes. We would also stop at White Castle to pick up a few hamburgers for my grandmother. Never once did we receive one or even want one. They cost fourteen cents at that time. We would have to cross what is now called the Jeffries Freeway, which turns into Highway 75. Initially, the street I was born on was 22nd, also known as Chrysler or Highway 75, where the Jeffries and Highway 75 meet up today. I anticipate this is probably why we initially had to move. We also had to take care of my great-grandmother, who lived with my grandma. She was my grandfather's mother. We had to bathe her, help her change clothes, comb her hair, and help her up and down the stairs to the bathroom. When I was thirteen, I joined my grandmother on a trip to Georgia to visit her family. We flew, and I helped take care of her the best that I could. I also went down south with our church on a trip to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, to visit my cousins. I never saw them again, not until my grandmother's funeral twenty years later.

I loved my grandfather, and we became best friends before he passed away. He had a wonderful garden full of greens, tomatoes, corn, green beans, grapes, apples, pears, cabbage, beans, and more. My grandfather would tell us stories about how he was raised and said he was never called by his name, only boy or son. He would say that when it got dark in the country, no one knew who was there or what was what. Of course, we have double-kin down south. My grandfather came to respect my father and helped him take care of us as much as possible. My grandfather died in 1992, and I was brokenhearted. I learned that my grandfather died from cancer. He smoked cigars, drank, and ate a lot of

salt and sugar. I started thinking about the things that were killing my family and wanted to break that family curse. I realized that it was not a curse but a pattern.

Childhood and Teenage Years

I became the fifth child in a family of eight with three brothers and four sisters. I was the oldest of three sisters, and as I grew older, I became responsible for their well-being. My mom said that when I was a baby in the hospital, my father brought a red dress for me to wear home. She told him to take the dress home because a newborn baby could not be dressed in red due to the dye. I remember at age three or four seeing a man in white at our apartment delivering a baby my mom was carrying. From that observation, I became misinformed and thought for half my life that God was White. I remembered that before starting school, I sat on my mom's lap as she drank and played cards. I remember the pies my father used to make. I remember the neighbor and his sons downstairs in the apartment building. They were child molesters. They would give me a pop bottle for personal favors. It was our little secret. Even today, I never shared that with my sibling nor my parents. I told God that I was a bad person and would never speak of it. My oldest brother took me to school on my first day. I liked being at school because we had milk, cookies, played games, and took a nap. I felt fear for the first or second time on my first day of school when I walked past the fence of my neighbor next door, and a person ran up to me as if he were going to hit me. I remember it was a Mexican child my age, about five or six years old. At age seven, my mother was no longer in the house, and her name was never mentioned. Around the same age, my second brother was cooking hamburgers. I walked near the stove, and grease popped in my face. My father patted

baking soda on my face, and I screamed. I stayed at the hospital for a long time, looking like a mummy. It was also around this time I learned I needed glasses and was the only one in the family that wore them. Kids used to call me names at school, and I felt bad and learned to make fun of them as well. Following my time in the hospital, I stayed sick physically, mentally, and spiritually until the age of thirty-nine, not knowing that it all started as a little girl lost. I came to have a little friend in my head as well. I know today that it was a spirit of both good and bad. I have since asked God to forgive me.

As kids, we played outside most of the time. We made up games and played baseball, marbles, jump rope, hoke scoke, four corners, hide and seek, racing, combed dolls' hair, made doll clothes, played cards, sang music, danced, and had spelling bees, to name just a few. I remember in third grade being sent home because the president of the United States had been assassinated. By then, my family had moved four times. My father would sew us cute dresses to wear to school, and we never wore pants until I turned fourteen and went to live with my mother. This time, we moved because someone burned my father's car while we were sleeping. Of course, I was awake and watching it out of the window. My father had messed around with a lot of women. He never asked me anything, and I was nine years old by now. I remember Stevie Wonder often coming to visit his cousins who lived two doors down from us. He played like any other adolescent. We would also visit and play with my cousins often. My older cousins and family members would frequently come around and check on my father. They loved each other until the end of their lives. I would later take my father and mother to many of their cousins' funerals. By age eleven, we moved again, and now my brothers and oldest sister were no longer living in our house. My oldest brother joined the army after the 1967 riot

here in Detroit, Michigan. I remembered my father bringing home a TV and how we had to make coal fires after the riot. He would take us to the railroad tracks to pick up coal, and we had to chop up wood and learn how to make fire. We had no light or gas in the house. My second brother went to live with my mother. My oldest sister was taken out of the house at an early age. She would visit at times, sometimes even having the privilege of spending a night. My oldest sister went to live with my father's only sister, and my youngest brother went to live with our cousin. My father treated my brother badly; he beat him with an extension cord and tied him to a chair. I remember at age thirteen hearing about Martin Luther King, Jr., being assassinated and not knowing who he was.

At age twelve, I won a spelling bee and received a dictionary with my name on it. I recall that my siblings and I were all abused by my father mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I drink my water with fruits and vegetables today by the grace of God. Eventually, instead of beating us regularly, my father would make me read the Bible to him, and I hated it. I did not understand the book, and it had no value for me. I was looking for love by this time. My father could not read, and several times, we had to sit in the car while he went to reading classes. My father worked all the time. He often went to bed when he got home and would make us go to our room because of something we did. Sometimes my father would come home and play his guitar and sing the blues, but that all came to a stop when we were sent to a juvenile detention center after my sister was caught stealing. We all lied and stole, but the youngest finally got caught. We never had food in the house and did not know how to cook.

At age thirteen, I remember we were sent to live with my grandparents because we were out of control. No matter how bad our father threatened to kill us, we still made poor

decisions. The children's services took us there until my father relocated. My grandparents lived in a double-wide trailer, and on the other side was my grandfather, brother, his wife, and four children. I had only been to church three or four times before this move, but I began going with my cousins, auntie, and friends I met in my grandparents' neighborhood. But my father would always quote the Bible. At this time, I started believing in my grandmother's God as one of hellfire and brimstone. I said to myself that if there is a God, I am going to do what I want to do and talk about it when I see him. I remember my period starting at age thirteen and thinking I was pregnant even though I had never had sex. My grandmother helped us with school, and two of my sisters would receive frequent beatings from my grandmother. My grandmother once helped me with a sewing project I started in school, a dress that I had gotten stuck on the sleeves. I later wore it in a fashion show at school. My father had now grown to think highly of his father and never again spoke badly about him. He also never spoke poorly about my mother, even though their marriage would never revive.

At age fourteen, I met my mother when my three sisters and I were sent to Ohio to live with her. One of my brothers was already living there, and he ran the streets and grew marijuana in the backyard. He would later come to care for me and help me to find direction in my life. My mother could sing and play the piano. She would sometimes take us to church. My mother could dance as well and knew people who had great careers. I never understood why she was not a famous singer or dancer. For the most part, my mother would leave us at her sister's house. We had fun with our cousins and even today, my cousins and I are still in touch. My mother was in an abusive relationship and drank regularly. I never saw my mother without a drink in her hand or in a healthy relationship;

she was always being abused physically, verbally, emotionally, or spiritually. My mother cleaned houses for people and was always kind. She always said that the truth would set us free. Her favorite song was “Take My Hand, Precious Lord” by Mahalia Jackson. One time, I was hit by a police car, and my mother took me home to leave me on my own without medication or food. My mother never took me to the doctor or asked me how I was feeling. She could not take care of me because her focus was always on her relationships. We struggled after my accident, and I limped to school and learned about pills. When I called my father to let him know I had been hit by the police car, he told me to come home, but I could not. The only time my mother was in a healthy relationship was when she was pregnant and still living with me. Her baby, however, was born feet first and did not survive. I would later allow my mother to keep one of my sons, who was born at the same time as that baby. My mother and her siblings got along well, and once my uncle got out of prison, my mother was not by another man who was able to get away with it. My uncle would not tolerate the mistreatment of his sister, even shooting a man three times for putting his hands on my mother. My mother could cook, and oh what a cook she was. She could even ring a chicken's neck and pluck their feathers. My mother could cook anything, and we would eat it. She could cook rabbits, squirrels, possums, chickens, fish, make cakes and pies, and so much more. My mother was quite fashionable and very pretty. However, I now know she was struggling with mental health issues. We were eventually sent to foster care because of my mother's neglect.

Only two of my sisters chose to go back to Detroit, Michigan. My sister closest in age and I chose to stay in Ohio. At age fifteen, I went to live with my oldest sister in Ohio. She had two kids and was pregnant with another. My sister was married and two

years prior had shot her husband. My sister was a stay-at-home mom and never went to work or school to improve her life. She depended on her husband to care for her, who could no longer work after being shot by her out of jealousy. Shortly thereafter, I left my sister's house and went to live with my brother, who by then was in a relationship with a much older woman. My younger sister was still in foster care, doing quite well, and I was proud of her. She was still in school and being cared for at the kids' foster home, the place I had left thinking it would be better to live with my older sister.

It may have been a mistake to leave the foster home, but I never lost sight of God. I ended up getting pregnant, the father being my brother's girlfriend's brother, who was much older. I was sixteen years old and ready to quit school because I was homesick for Detroit, Michigan, and felt I had no one to talk to. I decided to join the army, and when I was completing the required tests, I learned I was having a baby. I was lost in my thoughts often as I continued to grow in my pregnancy. A case worker from the children's home helped care for me and offered me a place in a home for pregnant teenagers. But again, I declined the support offered. My brother and his girlfriend, along with her brother, went back down south to live, leaving me in the house alone. I was five months pregnant, and I began to show. I quit school after they left because people were making fun of me and calling me names. I became very depressed and thought about killing myself. One of my brother's friends came by and saw that I had been abandoned and took me under his wing. He provided me with an apartment and started caring for me. I had no feelings for him and, admittedly, only wanted what I could get out of the situation. He was a much older man and was separated from his wife. Today, I am glad that I never had a romantic partnership with him because before I had my baby, he pointed a gun at me.

After I had my baby, I went to live with my mother and never went back to my brother's friend again. I delivered a baby boy, and my sister named him. My baby was three days old when my mother's boyfriend killed his cousin on the front porch. Two days later, my mother had left to stay somewhere else, and I was left in a house alone again. My sister had left as well, and her husband was upstairs. A friend of the family and my uncle came over. While my uncle was outside, the daughter of the man who was killed came and shot at my sister's husband and the friend of the family. They ran, and she came in the house, entering from the basement and pointed the gun at my head while I was holding the baby. Her cousin happened to come by to see what was happening and stopped her from killing me and my baby. Later, I would leave to live down south with my brother. After this memorable time, I decided I wanted to obtain my high school diploma. I took the test for my GED and failed and became depressed. I felt as it I should give up and thought my life was meaningless. I would have bad headaches constantly, and I never went to the doctor for help. I eventually met my first boyfriend after lying about my age to get a job at a factory. At eighteen, I had my second child, a little girl, and named her after her father. I bought my first car. I had learned to drive during my first pregnancy, taught by my brother's friend. I started going to church with my boyfriend and his father, who was a preacher. I also would attend the mosque with my brother, who had now become a Muslim and was a minister for the Nation of Islam. My brother had initially joined in Ohio, but I was not aware at the time. At one point, all the meat in the house started to go missing. My brother was starting to change his diet and tried to get everyone to start eating meat as well. We would laugh when we found the chicken in a drawer or a closet. My brother would teach me to do the right thing for the right reasons.

He never tried to force me to join the Nation of Islam. I followed them for four years and made the decision that Jesus was my choice. The men in the Nation would have two or three women each, and I just was not interested in being a part of that dynamic. They wanted the women to be quiet, and I had something to say. I did not like living in fear.

However, I loved the way the Muslim women dressed and would make skirts and scarves for myself. I stopped eating all pork and have not bought any salt since 1996. I stopped smoking cigarettes in 1992. I began taking self-defense classes and worked to become a good mother. I worked, but I would drink too much alcohol. My boyfriend's mother told him to leave me, and after we had one more child, he decided to leave. I decided to move to Denver, Colorado, and stayed there for one year. I cried all the time, was homesick, angry, and felt I had nowhere to go in life. I started looking for God and attended church on my own with my kids, looking for God. My ex-boyfriend tried to get back together with me, but I was not interested. He had a strong connection with his mother, and I with my father.

Adult Life

At age twenty-six, my grandmother died, and I went to the funeral in Detroit, Michigan. While there, I received a call from my ex-boyfriend's mother, the father of my two youngest children, saying that he had gotten a younger woman pregnant and would be marrying her and going into the Air Force to keep from going to jail. At this time, I became angry, suicidal, and homicidal. I had no reason to live anymore. I placed my son in school and decided to stay in Detroit, Michigan. My oldest sister left Ohio and moved back to Detroit, Michigan. By now, she had nine children, and they lived in various

places. My sister lived off welfare and did the best she could with her youngest three children and their father in her life. I met a man while in Detroit, Michigan, and while I thought I was in love with him, it only lasted a short time. I left him after a few years and moved to Ohio, where my kids were taken from me. I entered a dysfunctional relationship in 1980 and was stabbed by that man. Officials removed my children from my home, and I did not tell anyone out of shame. I left Ohio and went back to Detroit, Michigan. While with this boyfriend, I was placed in a hospital in 1981, where I learned about my illness and continued to look for God in all the wrong places. After the man I was with got sick, I met another man whom I dated for more than eighteen years. He would allow members of the Jehovah's Witnesses to come to the house and have bible studies. I respect all religions, but I have always chosen to call God Jesus the Christ. While sitting in my boyfriend's car, I fell and woke up in the hospital and was sent to an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting. I started learning about the disease of addiction. Once out of the hospital, it was ten more years before I would attend another social support meeting.

I went to church almost every other week and in 1991, I became sick and tired of being sick and tired. I admitted myself to the hospital and realized that my higher power had been with me the whole time. My boyfriend had an after-hours joint, and I was an alcoholic. My darkness got even darker, and I became suicidal and homicidal once again. I quit school because I could not stop using mood-altering substances. I was angry with God once again, and I again felt I was a little girl lost. My kids were still in Ohio. While in Detroit, Michigan, I helped care for my sister's children and worked odd jobs. My father never changed and while he was generally kind, he was mean when he could not

control me. He once said that if I were not sick, he would kill me. My father did not like the fact that I hung out in the streets and was free-spirited like my mother. He would call me names and speak in degrading ways around other people. One day, a friend of the family was at my family's house when my father was speaking poorly to me. She came to my defense and told me to never let a man talk to me like that again. He had planted fear in me and ran with it. After that day, it was unacceptable for him to degrade me no matter the circumstances. My friend Odie was a true friend, and she knew everyone in my family, as she lived down the street from my cousins. I got to know Odie when my brother had brought her over. She would take me fishing and teach me how to be a lady. She was incredibly talented and would sometimes even go to a social community support meeting with me. Odie could cook and do nearly anything that a man could. She was an only child and had started to remodel the house in which she was raised. Odie was dating a married man who would later leave her, and she became very paranoid and homeless. As for my boyfriend, I never broke up with him, but I left Detroit, Michigan, in 1993.

When I moved back to Ohio, I found my kids by God's grace and started a new relationship with them. In 1993, my aunt invited me to her church, and I never looked back. It was a Baptist church, and they did not believe in women preachers. I never understood the reasons for this policy, but I became the pastor's aide. In 1994, my brother living down south and in the Nation of Islam was killed in South America. I became angry with God once more. I asked him why my brother had died and why he couldn't have taken me instead of my brother. Being in that last unhealthy relationship almost killed me. I went to the hospital and needed to have surgery on my knees because I had been hit with a baseball bat during an unhealthy relationship. My brother had gone to

Honduras for some rest, suggested by one of his muslin doctors in Atlanta. My brother became a diabetic and was looking for a cure. It was said by a Muslim friend that my brother was given a shot of something, and it caused a heart attack, which resulted in his death. We were never to find his body or gain closure. My brother was only forty-two years old. He had no kids and was not married. He had left his unhealthy relationship years ago, but they would remain friends.

I continued to struggle with my relationship with God. I would begin a new relationship that would almost cost me my life. I left that relationship after three months because of the abuse and knowing that I deserved better and that love should not hurt in that way. Hurt people hurt people. Soon after, I would go to a domestic violence shelter and learn about self-talk. I made a list of all the men I had been with and how foolish I had been. That victim state-of-mind ended shortly thereafter because I learned that no one could do more to me than what I allowed. I did not have to give anyone power over me. I learned that I was not a victim but a survivor. I learned that anyone could choose to have relationships with many men. Women built homes, and I deserved to be with someone who loved me and wanted to spend the rest of their life with me.

I knew I could return to the man I had been with in Detroit, Michigan, but I finally believed I needed more. He was very kind to me and even in Ohio, he took good care of me. The only limit to God's grace was my refusal to step out of the way. I had always talked to God and sought his love in all the wrong places. I had tried everything, so why not try God? So far throughout my life, God has allowed people to help guide me, and I chose to live a life full of darkness. In 2000, my oldest brother died. He had moved to California and died shortly after from an overdose. I was to send for his ashes and plan

for his funeral at the VA hospital. Through receiving Jesus Christ, I was a new creation. In every area of my life, I was becoming spiritual, mentally, and physically fit. My mind had become transformed and was close to living the way God wanted me to live. In 2001, my boyfriend in Detroit, Michigan, died, and I was broken because I had always planned to move back to be with him again. I am grateful for everything that man did for me and even today, I refuse to settle for less. My journey toward the kingdom of God became my reason for living, and I thanked him for the time that my friend was part of my life.

After my brother's death, I moved my father from Detroit, Michigan, to Ohio. In the time that followed, I learned that a degree or license doesn't guarantee success in life. I must say that a lot of people in recovery were inspired and started attending school as well. They were very inspired by me, and especially by what my family had been through. Family was and has always been everything to me. I never put my family on the back burner. I cared for my father until he died in 2008. I cared for my mother until she died in 2008 as well. My next youngest sister next was close, and we lived together until she died in 2014. My baby sister died in 2016, and I held fast to God unchanging hands. I thank him for my family because I learned that we do not get to choose the family we are given. It is divine and chosen by God. I was there when I took my father to church, and he wanted to be baptized. He started going with me and joined the church. My sisters started to go to church with me until they could no longer because of health issues. I learned that with love and compassion, everything is easier. I have memories of my family that have died, and I'll hold those in my heart.

Educational Development

At age thirty-one, I decided to go back to school and try for my GED again. I passed and immediately went to college. In 1994, I went back to school and became a nurse's aide. I had health issues and started looking for another career while being a nurse's aide. The White employers treated me unfairly and never gave me a chance to grow in that area. I have never been a godless woman, and they always looked for fault in me and rather than try to understand me. I started attending social community support meetings again, and one was at the college. I met a friend of the family and asked her what she was studying. She was going to school to be a mental health counselor. The curriculum fit me well, and I enrolled. I initially enrolled to find out what was wrong with me. I still had noises in my head and was very paranoid, but it was my God all the time. I trusted no one but was co-dependent and would give someone the clothes off my back.

I never understood why I had these characteristics until I started taking the college courses on mental illness. I was so free-hearted; however, I now know that I was passive-aggressive. The noise in my head was a chemical imbalance due to my unhealthy eating. I suffered from a deficiency of vitamins and minerals and was not connecting to the God of my understanding. I never stopped going to school, even with the noise in my head and the chemical imbalance while suffering from health issues. In 1995, I changed my career to being a chemical dependency counselor, which they called mental health at the college level. I started working at the college and stopped being a nurse's aide. I decided to have a hysterectomy in 1995 and was treated badly because I told the doctors that I was recovering from mood-altering substances. They would not give me anything for pain until my aunt came to see me and demanded they do so.

I remember healing from the operation and realizing that God had stayed on my side through everything. He had already fixed it. I stopped claiming that something was wrong with my back and learned that it was my kidneys from taking medication for my stomach. I had been taking medication starting in Detroit, Michigan, for my stomach, which caused problems with my kidneys in addition to the drinking. I would later stop taking medication altogether. I was given medication for the major surgery I had, but the side effects caused me to stop taking them, and I had night flashes and mental mood swings. I was often mean and could not stop the noise in my head.

Professional Development

When I got my first check as a nurse's aide in 1994, I did not know what to do. I ran home to the domestic violence shelter to my room and started praying. I had been free from any mood-altering substances for months. My God told me that dreams do come true, and I longed for a car and an apartment, and to start a bank account and pay my dues for church. I would become a counselor in 1998 and get my first job in a treatment center. I started going to Central State University in 1998. We managed to get enough students in class at the Dayton Campus and completed a year of classes without having to travel to a different campus twenty miles away. Attending Central State University was highly dysfunctional, but I loved it. I was successful and kept my core values straight. I had left that first treatment center job for a better-paying position. I graduated from Central University in 2001 and in 2003, I attended the University of Dayton because I wanted more. I joined the church choir while at the University of Dayton, but I was treated unfairly because of the color of my skin at school. I hung in there as long as I

could. After I could not take any more of the verbal abuse from a certain professor, I allowed them to talk me into leaving the school with a master's in education and allied health without a license in counseling.

The Baptist church I had attended since 1993 did not believe in women becoming preachers and in 2011, I left the church. I was baptized in 1994, and it was a meaningful experience in my life. However, I knew that I needed to change everything because God does not dwell in garbage. My body is his temple, and all the cussing and putting poison in my body had to stop. I also had to stop sleeping with men because I was not married. Today, I realize that throughout my life, positive people were placed on this journey with me, and I am blessed and highly favored. I joined the SA in 2011, and the pastors whom we called Majors were women as well. Initially, I wanted to attend their college to become a Major; however, I was past the age limit. The SA became my new family in Christ, and I learned so much from those I met. Now, I feel that I have from the SA what I needed and will always be a part of it, but I am ready to move on. In 2013, I drove past United Theological Seminary and had a desire to know more about God and his word. By the grace of God, I contacted the school and enrolled in the program. All I had and ever wanted was a relationship and true companionship with God. Whatever it takes, I want peace with God, and to know him is to love him with all my heart, mind, soul, and body.

Once I started attending United Theological Seminary, I learned many new things about the Bible. The words became alive, and I know I was a living testimony. It dawned on me that what I knew was subject to revision. The Bible says, "A man's gift will make room for him" (Prv. 18:16). I received this blessing some thirty years ago when I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I find myself moving in a direction in life I

can be proud of and have fantastic days on purpose. God is dropping things in my life for me to pick up.

My work ethic is important today as a substance abuse counselor. However, it is time for me to move in another direction. At this time, I have just completed my second internship as a chaplain. I will be leaving my job as a counselor and staying on this journey as an intern chaplain. I am living intentionally, and I desire to continue to be a vessel for God. I get to understand people in their darkness and be there for them today. I know I have a purpose, and I can do all things with God. I know today that God has a purpose for me, and his will is my own true will for myself. I have learned that pains begin when I give access to the wrong voices in my life. When I begin to praise God, it ushers in his presence. I was able to gain personal and spiritual growth, including being able to evaluate my ministry in this Doctoral program.

There is something about having mentors today that brings hope and a purpose-driven life. I listen to God and am hoping that this mission will change my whole life. I know I could had never have made it without God. His love for me has saved my life. I do not wear a mask today and all I ever wanted was for someone to tell me that they love me and to know that Jesus loves me more than anyone else ever could. Today, I show up and God shows out. My family may not be here physically, but they are here in spirit. I thank God for my prayer community and those who are for or against me. I hold on to my faith because I know today, as for me and my family, we let go and let God.

I, Jessica Finney, a child of God, an evangelist and part of the universal Christian church on a journey to God on purpose in the spirit of truth, love, and best practice. The ministry is motivated by love for God, to celebrate recovery through the Gospel of Jesus

Christ and meet broken souls' needs in Jesus' name without bias or discrimination. Learning the principles on the road to celebrate recovery is a place where I once thought that I could never have reached through my Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I am encouraged to share the message of God with others. There are some who will not welcome God in their lives. My life is no secret. Turning my life over has afforded me to look at the wreckage of my past and do something about it by moving forward and leaving that broken part of me behind. I have forgiven myself and the people who harmed me. God lives in me and I do not have to do the same things over and expect a different result. No one is perfect, and I continue to embrace my fear. I love who I am today. God judges us by our heart, not by works. I have a passion for Jesus! And the way I see God in all situations, even the hard ones. Some days are better than others when it comes to my health; however, I praise God. My heart is for Jesus and throughout my life, I have been looking for love in all the wrong places. My eagerness to help others shows in all areas of my life. It's not always just about me today. I love being a vessel for God in my neighborhood as well as on the job. I hope and pray that I continue to absorb what it truly means to be Christ-like and practice these principles in all my affairs.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The organization I plan to use for the Biblical Foundation paper is the Salvation Army (SA), "An international movement that is an evangelical part of the Universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by love for God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in his name without discrimination."[1] The Salvation Army is where I built my relationship with God and found happiness, joy, and peace.

The early Salvationists did not envisage another church or denomination. Some perceived nineteenth-century churches as demonstrating a lack of concern for a largely unsaved world, especially the poor and working classes, materialism, compromised living, complacency, and an unwillingness to adapt to the needs of other classes and cultural groups. These tendencies were in direct opposition to the aims of William Booth and his people.

The early SA could be described as a parachurch (para meaning beside, or alongside), a group or agency that serves alongside the church and carries out a specific mission for which it is especially equipped. This was an agency to evangelize the poor

[1] The General of The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (London, UK: Salvation Books, 2010), 266, ttps://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7032990/#S10.

and working classes. However, the people who came to faith needed a church home, a fellowship of believers in which they could be nurtured, disciplined, trained, and encouraged. Most of the church congregation proved unable to accommodate the culture of poverty and provide the support needed. The converts returned to the mission and made it their spiritual home. The Salvation Army Handbook resonates, "this is most often marked by a turning to alternative spiritualities rather than to Christianity."[2] Unless Christians have a community of faith that serves as their spiritual support system, their conversions will probably be short-lived. The SA became a church with a missional emphasis.

My first experience with the SA was in 1991 when seeking healing for my brokenness. One of my greatest moments in life was trying to find God. My grandma was a true believer in Christ. I slipped away and started looking for God's love in all the wrong places. Redmond, Smith, and Collins write, "Unmet treatment needs for African American women with substance use disorders are not well defined in the literature. Substance use is a serious issue that often goes untreated."[3] Some women are so filled with shame and guilt that they are unable to reach out for assistance, resulting from their substance abuse.

In 2011, my life took a profound turn when I found solace in the SA. Their unwavering support became my new family in Christ, a community that embraces all. I had initially aspired to serve as a major or captain in their college, but I was past the age

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[2] The General of The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 264.

[3] Michelle L. Redmond, Sharla Smith, and Tracie C. Collins, "Exploring African American Women's Experiences with Substance Use Treatment: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Community Psychology* 48, no. 2 (Oct. 14, 2019): 1-19.

limit. The Baptist church, where I had been a member from 1993 to 2010, did not support women preachers, leading to my departure. However, the SA gave me a deep sense of belonging and acceptance, regardless of my past or circumstances. This sense of belonging and acceptance, a core value of the SA, is what I aim to instill in my research participants. The purpose of my research is to propose a study on faith-based recovery for individuals struggling with addiction, inspired by the SA's rehabilitation programs that taught me humbling lessons about my brokenness and God. In 2013, I took a leap of faith and enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, ready to continue my journey of learning and growth. Today, "we live in a glass-hand culture that highly values outgoing persons. This is especially true in the life of the churches."[4] "Poverty and feelings of thoughts are the most important features of the passively detached asocial person."[5]

Today, the SA offers many programs, including addiction treatment and community support. Part of the SA motto is, "We remain committed to serving everyone in need, regardless of their beliefs, backgrounds, or lifestyles. The Salvation Army believes that racism is fundamentally incompatible with Christianity, and that we are called by God to work toward a world where all people are loved, accepted, and valued."[6] One such program is the Tuesday gathering of senior citizens for three hours of fellowship, known as the Prime Seniors Tuesday Program. My research aims to reach

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[4] Wayne E. Oates, *Behind the Masks: Personality Disorders in Religious Behavior* (Louisville, KY: The Westminster Press, 1987), 96.

[5] Oates, *Behind the Masks*, 96.

[6] The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army's Response to False Claims on the Topic of Racism," The Salvation Army USA, https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/usn/news/the-salvation- armys-response-to-false-claims-on-the-topic-of-racism/.

those who are seeking God but are unsure of how to find Him. By helping participants understand who God is, we equip them with the tools to know God.

This project is designed to create a biblically healthy community for individuals suffering from various forms of addiction and dependency, using a twelve-step faith-based recovery ministry model. This research is not just a proposal, but a call to action, a crucial step towards providing effective and inclusive solutions for those in need. The urgency of this research cannot be overstated, as it has the potential to impact the lives of those struggling with addiction significantly.

Psalms 27:1-14 shows how God is the protector of those who seek His presence. "This psalm, though written by human hand, has God as the primary author. It speaks of a God who not only blesses but also seeks. God speaks and says, 'Seek ye my face (v. 8).'"[7]. This scripture goes hand in hand with a twelve-step faith-based recovery ministry model, and its first step talks about how, according to *The Narcotics Anonymous Step Working Guides,* Step One begins with recovery. It says, "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction and that our lives have become unmanageable."[8] Step One opens the door to an exhausting battle that a person has been working to overcome for a period. At some point, we surrender and realize, "the disease of addiction is what makes us addicts, not the drugs, not our behavior, but our disease."[9]

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[7] Kenneth Cummings, Sr., *Devotions on the Psalms: "A Lamp Unto My Feet and A Light Unto My Path"* (Hephzibah, GA: Kenneth Cummings Ministries, 2022), 25.

[8] Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, *The Narcotics Anonymous Step Working Guides* (Los Angeles, CA: Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1998), ix, https://gssana.org/books/na-step-working-guide.pdf.

[9] Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, *The Narcotics Anonymous Step Working Guides* (Los Angeles, CA: Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1998), 1, https://gssana.org/books/na-step-working-guide.pdf.

The faith-based recovery model is designed to transform lives, to move away from mind altering substances and live. Initially building a support system that will counteract feelings of isolation and lack of companionship. After many years of collaborating with criminal justice populations and in the field of substance abuse, the most challenging and, at times, frustrating situation facing many counselors is working with angry and resistant clients.

Sue Tyce, the author of Religiosity, Emotional Responses, Perceived Pressure, and Start-Time Compliance among Individuals Who are Court Mandated to Attend 12-Steps Groups reveals, "A large percentage of individuals referred to twelve-step groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are under court orders. Mandatory treatment has been shown to reduce prison and jail overcrowding, as well as criminal reoffenders. However, its traditional forms have been viewed as ineffective and usually present various clinical challenges for substance abuse providers. Herein lies the motivation for this research, which examines the religious backgrounds and emotional responses of individuals who are court-mandated to attend 12-step groups such as AA and NA."[10]

Matthew 18:20 reads, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am among them."[11] This scripture highlights the importance of community and fellowship in the context of faith-based recovery. African American women's remarkable journey with God and the experience of grief ended up in a hopeless situation that started once they got

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[10] Sue L. Tyce, "Religiosity, Emotional Responses, Perceived Pressure, and Start-Time Compliance among Individuals Who are Court Mandated to Attend 12-Steps Groups" (PhD diss., Oakland University, 2009), 23, ProQuest LLC.

[11] Michael D. Coogan, "Matthew 18:20," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1773.

off the boat and were sold. Stepping out in faith came further in life as our foremothers suffered. Romans 8:28 states, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."[12] This scripture underscores the belief that God can bring good out of even the most challenging situations, a comforting thought for those struggling with addiction. God engages in our lives every day and seeks through prayer and meditation, hoping for a better life, an act of redemption, and acts of God. God rescues his people through hope, a better life, acts of redemption, and acts of God. In many ways, we are misunderstood, and only God knows our hearts. It is in the darkness that God sees our redemption. Luke 5:31-32 reveals, "Jesus answered, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"[13] This scripture emphasizes the need for healing and the role of faith in the recovery process.

"Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in one of his famous sermons, speaks of the degradation that people of African descent experienced in this country; violence, oppression, degradation, lynching, beatings, inequities in employment and housing, and being denied access to public institutions. In the richness of the cadence of his voice, he asked America, "How long" would it be before sons and daughters of Africa would experience the freedoms that the sons and daughters of Europe experienced? In hospital rooms, prisons, and institutions people cry out, "How long?" Behind these cries are

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[12] Michael D. Coogan, "Romans 8:28," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1987.

[13] Michael D. Coogan, "Luke 5:31," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1839.

pain, alienation, oppression, and isolation. That which is sought after is relief, release, and delivery."[14]

Exegesis

Psalms 27:1-14 reads:

> The Lord is my light and my salvation; who shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoer assail me to devour my flesh, my adversaries, and foes, they shall stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident. One thing I asked of the lord that will I seek after to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock. Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD. Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! 'Come,' my heart says, 'seek his face!' Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation! If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing in out violence. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the lord![15]

In Psalm 27:1, David writes in the opening sentence, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall, I fear? The Lord is the stronghold[a] of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" David utilizes these three keywords to describe God as *light*, *salvation*, and *stronghold*. Just as God watched over and protected David, He will protect those who are

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[14] Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr., *Inescapable Questions of the Faith: Studies in Christian Discipleship* (Frankfort, KY: Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr. Ministries, 2005), 23.

[15] Michael D. Coogan, "Psalm 27:1-14," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 794-95.

dealing with substance and drug abuse. The story of David is a perfect example of how God manifests Himself in our lives. David was a shepherd boy who became king and was called the "man after God's own heart."[16] David is no saint, and there are plenty of sins and mistakes he has wrestled with as we learn his story. David didn't always make the best choices throughout his life. Sometimes, it is hard to see what God wants us to do amid chaos, trauma, and struggles, but King David certainly knew where to put his trust. God still chose to use David. David belonged to the tribe of Judah, the same tribe as Jesus. We can find comfort in the truth that God wants to use us for good, even though we are not worthy of his blessings.

In verses seven through nine, David pleads with the Lord to answer his prayer,

> Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! 'Come,' my heart says, 'seek his face!' Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

David was focused more on his enemy than on the Lord. He did not deserve an answer from the Lord and was a sinner appealing to the Lord to answer his plea. In verses one through six, David knows there is no reason to fear. He needs reassurance. David expresses his need for God, stating his trust and weakness at that moment. We all find ourselves in that situation at one time or another.

In the same way, we do not deserve an answer to our prayers, but the Lord is gracious. He provides what we do not deserve. The writer implores us to be in the Lord's grace so that "we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb.

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[16] David T. Barnard, *With Skillful Hand: The Story of King David* (Montreal, CAN: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 16-17, https://seminarybookshelf.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=the%20story%20of%20david&bookReviews=off&clusterResults=false&groupVariantRecords=true.

4:16).[17] Amid a sudden violent storm on the Sea of Galilee, Peter stepped out of a boat at the command of Jesus. He began to walk on the waves toward Christ. But soon, Peter took his eyes off Jesus, looked at the stormy wind, and started to panic. Like David, who prayed desperately, Peter cried out to the Lord, "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:30).[18] The Lord is generous and answers desperate prayers!

> If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing in out violence. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the lord.

Verses ten through fourteen affirm the Lord's love for us. It is a reminder that He will take care of everyone, no matter who we are. In the previous verses, one through nine, David cried for help in a time of great distress, while in verses ten through fourteen, there is a renewed vow of faithfulness to God, belief in His power and trust, and protection that only God can provide. David openly testifies that faith is not just about future promises but about experiencing God's goodness here and now. Psalms 27:1-14 concludes with, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (v. 14). We are called to be patient and wait; remember that everything happens only in God's time. This call serves as a reminder, characterized by strength and discipline. Wait on the Lord even when immediate circumstances seem daunting.

Throughout Christian history, Psalm 27 has been a source of inspiration and comfort for believers facing trials and uncertainties. The themes resonate with the

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[17] Michael D. Coogan, "Hebrews 4:16," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2107.

[18] Michael D. Coogan, "Matthew 14:30," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1768.

Christian experience, where faith is lived out in tension, struggle, and hope. The psalm invites believers to seek His presence above all else and to trust that He will protect them. As we consider this psalm, repeat David's prayer, trusting that as we seek God's face, we will experience His light, salvation, and strength in every aspect of our lives.

Biblical Foundations

Literary Setting

According to Phil J. Botha and Beat Weber, Psalm 27 is difficult to interpret. Their argument is based on the fact that "The structure and contents of Psalm 27 become more transparent within this literary context created by the editors of the Psalms."[19] It is interesting how it moves from trusting God to a cry for help. In this context, the two parts work well together to bring awareness to our faith when in doubt. David finds himself in a difficult situation, frightened that God will not answer his prayer.

Tremper Longman describes the book of Psalms as a book of poetry, which is a category that generates a strategy. He says, "Poetry calls for reflective reading. We have seen under 'Terseness' that poetry is concise language. Parallelism calls for close reading, in order to see how the second and, for tricola, a third colon sharpen or intensifies the thought of the first colon."[20] Because poetry initiates imagination, the reader is

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[19] Phil J. Botha and Beat Weber, "The Lord is My Light and My Salvation … (PS 27:1): Psalm 27 in the Literary Context of Psalms 25-34," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 45, no. 2 (2019): 19-50, https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/73257/Botha_Lord_2019.pdf?sequence=1.

[20] Tremper Longman, "Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary," in *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Volumes 15-16* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 85, https://ebook central-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=2033987&ppg=85.

comparing similes and metaphors. In this case, images that strengthen our understanding of God, humanity, and ourselves. Psalms arouse our imagination and stimulate our emotions, and that is what makes it real.

Peter C. Craigie and Marvin Tate address the arguments against the division of Psalms through Hermann Gunkel, an Old Testament scholar. Gunkel argues, "Although there are two principle sections in the Psalms, the whole should be perceived as a unity. The first part differs from the second in both form and substance."[21] Gunkel also suggests "a) In form, the Lord is referred to in the third person in vv. 1-6, but addressed directly in v. 7-13; b) In substance, the first section is characterized by confidence and trust, whereas the second contains the words of prayer."[22] Another argument implies that Psalm 27 is divided into three parts: verses one through six offer his sacrifices and praise, verses seven through thirteen address God directly, and verse fourteen is the answer. Although there may be many interpretations of Psalms 27:1-14, whether in form, structure, or setting, David poetically celebrates our triumphs and failures. The psalmist affirms that even in darkness, he has no fear that God is the light.

Craig Broyles believes, "when compared with others, Psalm 27 reads like two distinct psalms: one of testimony or confidence, perhaps occasioned by military threat (vv. 1-6), and one of prayer, perhaps occasioned by false accusation (v. 7-14). A testimony or confession of trust is usually part of a prayer psalm, but some psalms of testimony stand on their own without expressing any petition (Ps. 11, 16, 23, 62, 63, and

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[21] Peter C. Craigie and Marvin Tate, "Psalms 1-50*,"* in *Word Biblical Commentary*, *Vol. 19* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2016), 230, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=5608035&ppg=232.

[22] Craigie and Tate, "Psalms 1-50*,*" 230-231.

91). It seems odd the Psalm should first make confident forsake me" and "do not turn me over to … my foes."[23] While Dianne Bergant reports, "The psalms are first and foremost lyrical creations, poems that are rich in metaphor and fashioned according to the patterns and techniques of ancient Israelite poetry. One of the most distinctive characteristics of this type of poetry is its parallelism. In this feature, the second half of a poetic line somehow echoes the sense of the first."[24]

Whichever way this psalm is read, as a unit or broken down into two or three parts, David relays a message that is relevant to us in all situations. God is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent in every aspect of our lives. God is in total control of Himself and His creation. He is the ultimate criterion of truth and falsity, so his ideas are always valid, and since God's power and knowledge extend to all parts of his creation, He is present everywhere. Together, they define God's Lordship and yield a rich understanding of creation, authority, and salvation.

Cultural and Social Setting

> I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the lord! (Ps. 27:13-14).

Longman informs us that, "the psalm ends on a strong note of trust. Although he faces problems, the psalmist is confident that God will remain good toward him while he yet lives in the land of the living. He encourages his hearers to remain courageous and wait for God to respond."[25] David was facing a difficult time. He needed God's help.

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[23] Craig Broyles, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 123.

[24] Dianne Bergant, *Psalms 1-72, Volume 22* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 9.

There were times he doubted His presence, calling out to Him in desperation, and then with courage. The Lord is my light and our salvation, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (Jn. 8:12)."[26]

Indeed, it is in Jesus' presence that we have the type of security that the psalmist longed for those who loved us. Longman added, "for I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 8:37-39)."[27]

Psalm 27 endorses the purpose of this project and raises awareness of the impact of individual struggle, trauma, and many issues that may affect our lives. Initially, making a pilgrimage can be challenging and even painful as one bear all the offenses and indulgences that have misled us. Broyles suggests, "we should, however, be wary of making a pilgrimage to enter the temple to meet with God. We should, however, be wary of trying to pin down such a psalm too precisely and too definitely, because it consists largely of formulaic (i.e., common) phrases found scattered among many other prayer psalms."[28]

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[25] Longman, "Psalms," 211.

[26] Michael D. Coogan, "John 8:12," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1896.

[27] Longman, "Psalms," 213.

[28] Broyles, *Psalms*, 123.

Major Themes of the Text

Longman says:

> Major themes of Psalm 27 include: trust, seeking God, worship, prayer, obedience, hope, and patience. David teaches us that although we cannot escape grief and conflict, we can trust God to one day restore us. As part of his prayer, David repeated God's promises not because he believed that God would forget them but because God promised to display David's faith in Him. God loves each person the way a parent loves a child. He also wants humans to cry out to Him when we face conflict, even when we do not know God's plan for us and things seem hopeless. All we must do is patiently wait for God and His timing. The psalmist (David) in 27 expresses a strong desire to be in God's house, the place where God makes his presence clear for His people.[29]

We turn to God when we need help, and he can give us the help we need—the power to free us from our dependencies. We may be surprised to find that, in those moments, God answers all our prayers. As time passes, it becomes much easier to reach out to God. According to Arterburn, "we discover how wonderful he is and how much he loves us, we draw near to him because of the joy we experience in his presence."[30]

Bergant admits, "Psalm 27 is a prayer of confidence of an individual. She describes God as the light that caste out fearsome darkness. God is true salvation and protection from all harm. God is the only refuge for safety. Honestly, there is no need to be afraid."[31] And truly, there is no need to be afraid. She states, "Besides the plea for deliverance from enemies and the harm that they might inflict, the psalmist prays for continued access to the house of the Lord, the place where God can be encountered. It is in the temple that prayer and sacrifice are offered and refuge from harm is provided. Secure in the protection of God that the temple affords, the psalmist promises continued

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[29] Longman, "Psalms," 208.

[30] Stephen Arterburn and David Stoop, *NLT Life Recovery Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 697.

[31] Bergant, *Psalms 1-72*, 22 and 33.

devotion. 7-14 The psalm moves from sentiments of confidence in the power and graciousness of God to cries for help in a time of distress."[32]

For example, imagine a child left to cry until they fall asleep; it is just too hard to bear. Even if parents close their ears to the baby's cries, God hears them and answers. The same is true for us. The way of the Lord is both the way of wisdom and righteousness, and "adhering to that way will keep the psalmist away from the snares of enemies and directed toward the land of the living, where the faithful enjoy the blessings of God."[33]

What Psalm 27 Teaches Us

The Psalms overflow with encouragement, hope, and God's mercy and love. One of significance is Psalm 27. How does David's story impact our lives? What can we learn from the poetic words of King David? Those who have read Psalm 27 know that God loves David. He had God's heart. He knew God heard his prayers. The opening verse starts, "The Lord is my light and salvation, who shall I fear?" (Ps. 27:1). There are few men who are courageous enough or willing to stand before a lion, a bear, or even a giant, but we see a young shepherd boy with immense courage.

Even if we stumble, we must keep trying to live an honest and open life, doing all we can to discover and fulfill God's will for us. We don't have to fear God's judgment since he loves us despite all our faults. "As we seek God's will for us, we must also avoid the people who will lead us back into our destructive lifestyles. Nothing good can come

[32] Bergant, *Psalm 1-72*, 33-34.

[33] Bergant, *Psalm 1-72*, 33-34.

from associating with those who formerly dragged us down. We also need to avoid the situations and activities that could tempt us and lead to an eventual fall."[34]

Psalm 27 is very significant to this project. Longman writes about a translation found in more than sixty psalm titles called mizmor. "Mizmor is a noun derived from the verbal root Samar, which means 'to make music' or 'to sing praise.' In Jewish tradition, the book is known as Tehillim, the plural of Tehilla, and thus means 'Praises' or Hymns.' This title acknowledges that, even though laments outnumber the hymns in the book, the predominant tone is praise."[35] Making music and singing praise are vital to healthy living for seniors participating in this project. How do we honor this need?

Arterburn and Stoop remind us of the temptation around us. They tell us, "We need to learn how God wants us to act amid such pressures. He wants to become the stabilizing factor in our lives. Apart from him, we have no power against the things that once put us in bondage. We must determine, one day, that we have no power against the things that once put us in bondage. We must determine, one day at a time, to follow God, patiently and confidently waiting for him to protect and lead us."[36]

I did drugs. I drank alcohol and reached a point in life where I felt I needed to relieve the pressures of life, and the next thing I knew, I was addicted. Before realizing it, the world is crashing down. Many times, those suffering from addiction cannot find their way back, and they die from the horrors of addiction. Step One of the healing processes is

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[34] Broyles, *Psalms*, 123.

[35] Longman, "Psalms," 208.

[36] Arterburn and Stoop, *NLT Life Recovery Bible*, 697.

when we admit that we were powerless over our addiction and that our lives have become unmanageable, which relates to Psalm 27:1.

When I was working as a professional counselor with a sick Black woman, she sat in front of me with so many wounds to share and so much pain. I am trying to help her understand that she is worthy of good things and what being free of the addiction will do for her life. She must admit complete defeat; how can I help her with that? Greg Grandchamp emphasizes that "we find that we have placed our hope in our possessions and position, and have hoped in nothing. It can all be gone in a moment."[37] Working the twelve steps of recovery frees a suffering addict from the disease of addiction. The first step of recovery says hope is something that we look forward to and that it gives us faith.

God Wants Us to Find Him

John Piper wrote, "Communion with God is not merely *learning about* God but enjoying *fellowship with* God in the truth he reveals about himself."[38] As part of this project, my objective is to help all participants see that fellowship with God is like a long conversation with a dear friend. The way the Apostle Paul puts it is that one must "have the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know (Eph. 1:18)." Most people would say that everyone knows God. I would argue, however, that not everyone knows God. This project is about finding God and meeting Him where the person, as a participant, is on their journey. Many of us learn to cope with our many triumphs and challenges without

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[37] Greg Grandchamp, "Chapter 5: We All Seek Something," in *In Pursuit of Truth: A Journey Begins* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2019), 34.

[38] John Piper, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 75.

actively knowing God. Actively participating in the daily grind can sometimes be meaningless. Occasionally, it can even make us question our faith or how we endure the anxiety of everyday life. These are the times we find comfort in God's words. David and the other psalmists cried out for help and extended a message of gratitude and praise.

Experiencing frustration, hopelessness, despair, and even anger is not done alone; the best solution is to call upon the Lord, as King David and the other psalmists model. David puts all his faith, hope, trust, and confidence in God Almighty. All around him, David faces adversity. Fear presses in; foes are everywhere. But David refuses to cower and instead clings to his true hope, his Father God. David pledges to seek God's face in all things in verses eight and nine and craves God's direction over all his steps in verse eleven. It matters not if other humans on earth, even his flesh and blood, reject him; he knows he belongs to God, and God will always provide and hold him close. When feeling rejected and oppressed, this psalm reminds us to put our hope in the only One who matters, God. Most of the prime program seniors are facing the same problems and do not have faith or trust in the Lord.

In this program, we want to hear their testimonies, personal accounts of what God has done or not done for them, including traumatic experiences or spiritual transformations. Testimonies should never point people to the individual but rather to Christ and His glory, and honor in His name. The most remarkable testimony we have is our journey to salvation. Whatever path one takes that leads him or her to receive Jesus Christ as Savior is worth sharing. We can each bear witness to God's saving grace, His love, and His mercy. Even though a person may not have been in the limelight achieving well-known things, he or she is a sinner, nonetheless. Psalms 105:1-2 says, "Give praise

to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts."[39] Whatever the prime program seniors or participants' testimonies, we trust that many need to hear them. We also find forgiveness and salvation in Jesus. That is testimony; many need to listen to it.

When we reflect on the challenges in our lives, we can pray a prayer of repentance. Some do not understand the sinner's prayer. The Bible clearly states that we are sinners in need of mercy and God's forgiveness. Titus 3:5-7 states,[5] "he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water[a] of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. [6] This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, [7]so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."[40] Robert Glenn Howard, the author of A Theory of Vernacular Rhetoric: The Case of the "Sinners Prayer" Outline, reveals, "The invitation of the traditional prayer performance seems to be a strategy for converting non-Christians; however, it becomes clear that the deployment of the prayer is also an invitation for the already-converted to "give testimony" to their faith."[41] If we place our faith in Jesus Christ, our sins will be forgiven by God.

All we have to do is believe that He died in our place and rose from the dead, as stated in Romans 10:9-10. We can be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus

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[39] Michael D. Coogan, "Psalm 105:1-2," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 859.

[40] Michael D. Coogan, "Titus 3:5-7," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2098.

[41] Robert Glenn Howard, "A Theory of Vernacular Rhetoric: The Case of the 'Sinner's Prayer' Online," *Folklore* 116, no. 2 (2005): 172–88, http:// https://www-jstor-org.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/stable/30035276?seq=1.

Christ alone, as expressed in Ephesians 2:8. Ephesians 2:8 declares,[8] "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."[42]

Reciting the sinner's prayer is a declaration to God that we, as sinners, accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. The Bible offers no magical words that provide salvation. Ultimately, it is only through Jesus' death and resurrection that we are saved and find faith in Jesus Christ, the source of salvation for those in need.

As I have laid out a specific text in this Biblical Foundations Chapter, I will now proceed with the Historical Foundations Chapter and highlight insights in the history of mental illness treatment, ancient theories, and other areas that examine and address the subject area of this thesis.

[42] Michael D. Coogan, "Ephesians 2:8," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2055.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The evolution of mental health treatment, a story that spans cultures and millennia, has been significantly influenced by the interdisciplinary fields of science, chemistry, medicine, and psychology. The history of mental health and the evolution of treatment is not always a flattering story, but it explains a great deal about how and why the landscape of mental health treatment is what it is today and where it could go next.[1] This journey dates to antiquity and is not always a flattering story. However, it provides crucial context to the current landscape of mental health treatment and its potential future directions.

As we stand on the threshold of a new era, the landscape of addiction continues to evolve, presenting both unprecedented challenges and exciting opportunities for progress. The opioid crisis, which has ravaged communities across North America and beyond, serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing threat posed by addiction in the modern world.[2]

[1] AdCare Treatment Centers, *History and Timeline of Mental Health and Addiction Treatment* (Lafayette Township, NJ: No publisher listed, 2022), https://sunrisehouse.com/addiction-info/history-evolution-mental-health-treatment.

[2] Editorial Team, "The Urge: Our History of Addiction: From Ancient Times to Modern Society, Modern Challenges and Future Perspectives: Navigating the New Frontiers of Addiction," NeuroLaunch, https://neurolaunch.com/the-urge-our-history-of-addiction/.

Part of this project allows readers to see the value of the Prime Seniors Tuesday Program and the prolonged effects of addiction. Throughout history, drug and alcohol addiction has taken its course. Societal understanding of addiction has evolved, and so too has our scientific knowledge. Addiction research has made enormous progress, casting light on the multifaceted interaction of living, emotional, and social factors that contribute to addictive behaviors. In addition, other factors, like stress, trauma, and social isolation, can all increase vulnerability to addiction. The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program understands the great emphasis on addressing the social causes of health in addiction prevention and treatment strategies, and it recognizes the significant role that social factors play in both the development and treatment of addiction.

While we continue to grapple with addiction challenges in our society, one thing is clear: knowledge is power. It is crucial to stay informed about the available programs. From twelve-step programs to alternative support groups or individual therapy, a variety of treatment options empower individuals to choose the path that best suits their needs. However, the key to recovery is not just the treatment itself, but the support system that surrounds the individual. Friends, family, and community play a crucial role in recovery, providing the essential support and encouragement needed to keep moving forward. Programs that involve loved ones in the recovery process can be compelling, helping to heal relationships and build strong, supportive networks. Creating this community is like assembling a reinforcement team, surrounding oneself with people who will advocate for and understand the individual journey. This support network may include recovering individuals, family, friends, or even a sponsor from a twelve-step program. Each person must remember that he or she is not alone on this journey.

Ongoing care and aftercare programs stress the importance of transparency and self-reflection in the recovery process. As a former addict, it is not about never falling; it is about learning to get back up. Relapses are not a sign of failure but an opportunity to reassess, learn, and return stronger. It is like falling off a bike, dusting oneself off, figuring out what went wrong and getting back on the bike. It is not about moral failing or lack of willpower but a chronic condition that requires understanding, compassion, and comprehensive treatment. Each setback is a chance to learn and grow, and it is an integral part of the journey towards recovery. Every step, even those that seem like a setback, is a step forward in one's journey.

The most important takeaway is that recovery is not just a possibility but a reality. It is not an easy journey, and it is not always pretty, but with the proper support and resources, individuals can overcome addiction every day. This message of hope is ideal for those struggling with addiction, showing that a brighter future is within reach. There is reason for hope and helping others understand addiction, and new approaches are offering fresh perspectives on recovery. Society's attitudes are shifting, reducing stigma and increasing support for those struggling with addiction. This shift is crucial in creating a more compassionate and understanding environment for individuals in recovery.

The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program is committed to fostering a more compassionate, understanding society. Unfortunately, addiction does not discriminate. It could affect any of us or our loved ones. Educating ourselves and others creates a world where recovery is possible but probable. This paper will examine the historical foundation of medical health treatment programs and their effect on individuals who have

an addiction. “Do we really know who we are? Wouldn’t it be great to be asked while growing up, “Who are you, really?”[3]

In the Early Seventies

Sarah G Mars, the author of *The Politics of Addiction: Medical Conflict and Drug Dependence in England Since the 1960s* states, “In the early 1970s England might have visited its general practitioner (GP), who would have sent him either to one of the new specialist NHS Drug Dependency Units (DDU) known as the clinics.”[4] The clinics undercut England’s black market and their distribution of drugs to people with an addiction. In addition, the clinics prevented overdoses and deaths of those exposed to laced or cut drugs.[5] Laced drug means mixing a substance with another, often more dangerous drug which offer a deadly risk. Many individuals unknowingly consume these tainted drugs leading to a higher likelihood of overdoses and death. The clinics offered a safer and more effective way to overcome addiction.

Kari A. Stephens examines the chronic conditions that overcome most individuals who suffer from substance abuse and the side effects along with it, including diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. The condition is called substance use disorder (SUD). She says, “Patients with a substance use disorder (SUD) often present with co-occurring chronic conditions in primary care. Despite the high co-occurrence of chronic medical

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[3] Juanita C. Rasmus, *Learning to Be: Finding Your Center After the Bottom Falls Out* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 14, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=6265107&ppg=14&c=RVBVQg.

[4] Sarah G. Mars, *The Politics of Addiction: Medical Conflict and Drug Dependence in England Since the 1960s* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=1039414&ppg=16.

conditions and SUD, little is known about whether chronic condition outcomes or related service utilization in primary care varies between patients with versus without documented SUDs."[6]

People who have substance use disorders (SUD) also often have mental health disorders, and vice versa. Known as a co-occurring disorder or dual diagnosis, a co-occurring disorder occurs when an individual has both a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder. Co-occurring disorders are common; approximately half of the people who have one disorder will also have the other at some point in their lives. The 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) provides data and evidence that will promote mental health, prevent substance abuse, and maintain treatment and support in recovery. Key findings highlight the 2022 SUD results:

> In 2022, 48.7 million people aged 12 or older (or 17.3%) had a substance use disorder (SUD) in the past year, including 29.5 million who had an alcohol use disorder, 27.2 million who had a drug use disorder, and 8.0 million people who had both an alcohol use disorder and a drug use disorder.
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> Among the 39.7 million adults aged 18 or older in 2022 who had an SUD in the past year and did not receive substance use treatment in the past year, 94.7% (or 36.8 million people) did not seek treatment or think that they should get it. An estimated 0.8% of adults with an SUD (or 313,000 people) sought treatment, and 4.5% of adults with an SUD (or 1.8 million people) did not seek treatment but thought they should get it. An estimated 6.7% of people ages 18 and older had a co-occurring disorder in 2020.[7]

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[6] Kari A. Stephens, Imara I. West, Kevin A. Hallgren, et al., "Service Utilization and Chronic Condition Outcomes among Primary Care Patients with Substance Use Disorders and Co-Occurring Chronic Conditions," *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 112 (2020): 49–55, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2020.02.008.

[7] SAMSHA, "Overall Highlights for 2022 NSDUH (PDF)**:** 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health," SAMSHA, https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt42731/2022-nsduh-main-highlights.pdf.

Ancient Theories

Contrary to ancient theories, mental illnesses were often believed to be the result of supernatural causes behind these strange actions. A. M. Foerschner gives us a historical overview of mental illness and its impact on society and care. He states, "Early man widely believed that mental illness was the result of supernatural phenomena such as spiritual or demonic possession, sorcery, the evil eye, or an angry deity and so responded with equally mystical, and sometimes brutal, treatments."[8] Remedies, therefore, ranged from the mystical to the brutal. Anthropological discoveries dating as far back as 5000 BCE showed evidence of trephining, which the *Inquiries* journal explains as the process of a hole (or a trephine, from the Greek word for boring) being bored into the skull, with the use of rudimentary stone instruments. As a result, trephining endured for centuries, used as a treatment for several conditions, including skull fractures, migraines, and mental illnesses. The tools were gradually upgraded to skull saws and drills that were developed for the exclusive purpose of treatment.

When violence was not used, priest doctors like those in ancient Mesopotamia would use rituals based on religion and superstition because they believed that demonic possession was the reason behind mental disturbances. Such rituals would include prayer, atonement, exorcism, and incantations to drive out evil spirits. Alexander and Selesnick tell us that "other means attempted to appeal to the spirit with more human devices--threats, bribery, punishment, and sometimes submission, were hoped to be an effective

[8] A. M. Foerschner, "The History of Mental Illness: From Skull Drills to Happy Pills!," *Inquiries* 2, no. 49 (2010): 1-4, http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1673/the-history-of-mental-illness-from-skull-drills-to-happy-pills.

cure."[9] There are two different forms of treatment: one is meant to heal and express spirituality, while the other causes more pain.

It was the ancient Egyptians who had the most progressive ideas at the time in how they treated the people among them who had mental health concerns. Froeschner claims "the Egyptians were also very advanced in terms of medicine, surgery, and knowledge of the human body. Two papyri dating back to the sixteenth century BCE, the Edwin Smith papyrus and the Ebers papyrus document early treatment of wounds, surgical operations, and identifies, very likely for the first time, the brain as the site of mental functions."[10]

James N. Butcher, Susan Mineka, and Jill M. Hooley express how "these papyri also show that, despite innovative thinking about disease, magic and incantations were used to treat illnesses that were of unknown origin, often thought to be caused by supernatural forces such as demons or disgruntled divine beings."[11] Mental illness carries so many social stigmas that reveal both positive and negative influences in many cultures. Through the Middle Ages, mental illness was a result of an imbalance of these humors. Patients were given emetics and laxatives and bled using leeches or cupping to bring back their equilibrium.[12] Specific purges included a concoction developed by Ptolemy called Hiera Logadii, which combined aloes, black hellebore, and colocynth to cleanse one of

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[9] Franz G. Alexander and Sheldon T. Selesnick, *The History of Psychiatry: An Evaluation of Psychiatric Thought and Practice from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), 8.

[10] Foerschner, "The History of Mental Illness," 1.

[11] James N. Butcher, Susan Mineka, and Jill M. Hooley, *Abnormal Psychology* (Boston: MA: Pearson Education, Inc., 2007), 28.

[12] Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 187.

melancholy. Confectio Hamech was another laxative developed by the Arabs that contained myrobalans, rhubarb, and senna.[13]

Later, tobacco imported from America was popularly used to induce vomiting.[14] Other treatments to affect the humor consisted of extracting blood from the forehead or tapping the cephalic, saphenous, and/or hemorrhoidal veins to draw corrupted humor away from the brain.[15] In addition, purging, bloodletting (also known as phlebotomy), and customized diets were used. For example, "raving madmen" were told to follow diets that were "cooling and diluting," consisting of salad greens, barley water, and milk, and avoid wine and red meat.[16]

Generally, custody and care of the mentally ill were left to the individual's family, although some outside intervention occurred. The mentally ill in the custody of family were widely abused and restrained, particularly in Christian Europe. Due to the shame and stigma attached to mental illness, many hid their mentally ill family members in cellars, caged them in pigpens, or put them under the control of servants. Others were abandoned by their families and left to a life of begging and vagrancy.[17]

My project proposal will speak to addressing the subject of women facing mental illness, exacerbated by the stigmatization and hospitalization of these individuals, and the use of substance abuse to deaden the pain. Men and influential people could admit women whom they thought were strong-willed to clinics or locations out of public view.

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[13] MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 187.

[14] MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 188.

[15] MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 191.

[16] Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42.

[17] Porter, *Madness*, 92.

The doctoral research project aims to develop a strategy for developing biblically healthy, recovering women, mainly African American women, suffering from mental illness and substance abuse, by utilizing a twelve-step faith-based recovery ministry model.

Women and Mental Illness

The first psychiatric hospital in the world was founded in Valencia, Spain, in 1406. Noted historians acknowledge this was not a cause for celebration. Asylums like the one in Valencia, Spain, offered no actual treatment or comfort to the mentally ill, forcing patients to live in inhumane conditions and subjecting them to cruel abuse. It was called Hospital de los Inocentes (The Hospital for the Innocent).[18] Mental patients were isolated, and the social community rejected them.[19] In the latter part of the nineteenth century, there was a call for reform in Devon, England, which abandoned methods of treatment based on restraint.

Carol Yanni writes about the architecture of hospitals for the mentally ill. It was in Paris in 1792 where one of the most important reforms in the history of mental health treatment took place. Phillipe Pinel, "the founder of moral treatment," is described as the cornerstone of mental health care in the 1800s. He asserts that insanity was treatable and that the mentally ill should be able to walk the beautiful grounds of the Salpêtrière.[20] The

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[18] J. J. Lorez-Ibor, "The Founding of the First Psychiatric Hospital in the World in Valencia," *Actas Espanolas de Psiquiatra* 36, no. 1 (January-February 2008): 1-9, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nlh.gov.

[19] M. M. Nenadovic, "Development of Hospital Treatment of Persons with Mental Disorders," *Serbian Archives of Medicine* (December 2011), 139, https://pubmed.ncbe.nim.nih.gov.

[20] Carol Yanni, *The Architecture of Madness: Insane Asylums in the United States* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 25-26, https://ebookcentral-proquest.comSeminarybook shelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=335403&ppg=39.

history of mental health was ready to take a big step forward. According to Phillipe Pinel, a French psychiatrist, insane people did not need to be chained, beaten, or otherwise physically abused. Instead, he called for kindness and patience, along with recreation, walks, and pleasant conversation.[21] In addition, filth, noise, and abuse were eliminated quickly after patients were unchained, provided with sunny rooms, allowed to exercise freely on the asylum grounds, and were no longer treated like animals.[22] The conditions improved, and the patients were no longer treated as animals. The change in treatment significantly improved their health and healing.

Sigmund Freud, the famous Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, developed his theory of psychoanalysis, which gave rise to the practice of encouraging patients to talk about whatever came to mind. According to Foerschner, "Freud believed that the human mind was structured in three divisions—the id, the ego, and the superego. The id functioned unconsciously, driven by the two main primal desires for sex and aggression. The superego functioned both consciously and unconsciously, demanding that the individual deny the id's impulses and instead live a virtuous life, striving to meet society's ideals."[23] Freud's work opened other doors of mental health treatment, including psychosurgery, electroconvulsive therapy, and psychopharmacology.

One of the most outrageous chapters in the history of mental health treatments was psychosurgery. First developed in the 1930s, a patient would be put into a coma, after which a doctor would hammer a medical instrument (like an icepick) through the

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[21] James W. Trent, Jr, "Moral Treatment," Social Welfare Project, https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/issues/moral-treatment-insane/.

[22] Butcher, Mineka, and Hooley, *Abnormal Psychology,* 38.

[23] Foerschner, "The History of Mental Illness," 3.

top of both eye sockets.[24] The process was known as a lobotomy. Aside from a 25% death rate, lobotomies also resulted in patients who were unable to control their impulses, were unnaturally calm and shallow, and/or exhibited a total absence of feeling.[25] The procedure was successful to calm violent patients, thus rendering them lethargic. This treatment was abandoned with the introduction of psychoactive drugs, which may have seemed preferable to their previously uncontrollable behavior. Some considered this a cure for their previous behavior.

Hospitalization in Colonial America

The radical nature of moral treatment made waves on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. When the moral method reached the shores of the United States, doctors understood it to be an all-inclusive way of treating mentally ill people by working on their social, individual, and occupational needs. This method was the first time that the idea of rehabilitating sick, mentally ill people back to recovery and eventual reintegration with their families and communities became practical.

Mental health service utilization research has consistently found that most adults with mental disorders do not receive treatment. According to recent national surveys, less than half of adults with a mental disorder used services in the twelve months before being interviewed. Persons belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups specifically underutilize mental health services. African Americans, for example, are less likely than whites to use outpatient mental health services. Only 32% of Black Americans with a

[24] Alexander and Selesnick, "*The History of Psychiatry*," 285.

[25] Butcher, Mineka, and Hooley, *Abnormal Psychology,* 620.

mental disorder use professional services. Only 22% of Caribbean Blacks and 48% of African Americans with severe symptoms of major depression receive treatment. These findings suggest that the service needs of a significant proportion of Black Americans with mental disorders are not being met.[26] Women living in vulnerable neighborhoods experience poverty, homelessness, psychiatric issues, illicit substance use, HIV, and a lowered life expectancy at a higher rate.

Isabelle A. Linden, Iris Torchalla, and Michael Krausz conducted a study that focused on addiction in maternity. The study aimed to explore the history of mental illness and trauma in a sample of thirty-one women who had recently given birth and had a substance use problem while pregnant. They examined the socio-demographic characteristics of addiction, trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder; substance abuse, use, and dependence; and psychiatric symptoms. The results show that childhood and adult traumatic experiences existed in most of the sample, and one-third presented a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis at the time of the interview. Women-centered services , as well as trauma-informed care and further research on appropriate treatment for substance-using, are in great demand for traumatized women with mental illness.[27]

Women's Plight in Mental Health

Discussions about Black women with mental illness do not get much attention. We are either mad or sad, as written by Julia Jordan-Zachery. Much of our pain, sacrifice,

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[26] Amanda Toler Woodward et al., "Use of Professional and Informal Support by African American and Caribbean Blacks with Mental Disorders," *Psychiatric Services* 59, no. 11 (November 2008): 1292, doi.org/10.1176/ps.2008.59.11.1292.

[27] Isabelle A. Linden, Iris Torchalla, and Michael Krausz, "Addiction in Maternity: Prevalence of Mental Illness, Substance Use, and Trauma," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 22, no. 10 (November 2013): 1070–84, doi:10.1080/10926771.2013.845279.

and struggles go unnoticed. We become silent individuals who do not discuss our challenges until problems arise. A campaign launched at Howard University in collaboration with Black colleges and universities in 2010 addressed mental challenges in the Black community. It brought awareness to mental health in the Black community. It is a silent illness that we face every day. Julie Jordan-Zachery writes, "The campaign is a battle to make visible what has too often been kept invisible in the Black community – mental illness. It is an attempt to challenge the silence that cloaks mental illness."[28]

Jordan-Zachery approached the subject of mental illness in many ways, through narratives, autobiographies, race, class, and gender, blogs, and interactions with other Black women. She notices that gender differences and mental disorders in the African American population are rarely considered. For centuries, women's natures had been thought inseparably linked to reproductive organs, and, over time, this supposedly scientific fact had evolved into the belief that it was natural for women to be fulfilled solely by being wives and mothers. It has become part of our structural location, in addition to "racism, cultural alienation, violence (sexual and physical), poverty, housing segregation contribute to black women's experience with mental illness."[29]

My father's people were from a small town in Georgia, and I asked my father before he died where everyone on his side of the family was from. I remember him saying "the crazy house," which was how he referred to Bolingbroke, Georgia. True enough, my father always kept horseshoes over his doors, so one day I asked him. He

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[28] Julia S. Jordan-Zachery, "Why So Many Sisters Are Mad and Sad," *Shadow Bodies: Black Women, Ideology, Representation, and Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 125, https://www.degruyter.com/isbn/9780813593432.

[29] Jordan-Zachery, "Why So Many Sisters Are Mad and Sad," 127.

explained, “to keep the evil spirits out.” My family never went to get help for their addictions nor mentioned mental illness. There was substance abuse involved but my father, specifically, never drank or took drugs. My grandmother fit the description of a stay-at-home mom, while my grandfather drank, used drugs, and pursued women. Even so, my grandmother simply tolerated his lifestyle.

However, mental health treatment has changed over time and has come at a price, with thousands falling prey to addiction and falling through the cracks of the modern healthcare system. The challenges indicate that proper treatment for mental health will not be easy. However, evolution and advancements suggest that today’s improvements are infinitely better than anything that has come before. Alcohol and drug use exists on a spectrum ranging from occasional use without consequences to a devastating chronic illness.

A history of systemic injustices and racism has contributed to poorer outcomes regarding substance use, treatment, and consequences in society. Substance use disorders may exist on their own, intensify chronic disorders, or cause other prolonged illnesses. Addiction remains a barrier to care for patients with a lack of access to treatment, particularly in rural settings. As Black women, we need to learn to educate ourselves and arm ourselves with information to encourage individuals to recognize mental illness. Included on that list are bipolar disorder, post-partum depression, anxiety, and panic disorder. Holloway states, “You are not alone, especially if you are an African American woman. Clinical depression is a serious medical illness that has a 15% chance of affecting a person in his or her lifetime. That figure is perhaps as high as 25% for

women, according to the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the reference guide for mental health professionals."[30]

Organizations and Pioneers in Treating Women

Many African American women have come forward to bring awareness to mental illness in our community. Little did they know the importance of the hard discussions surrounding mental health for minority communities. Women learn to express their disappointment, pain, and mental anguish through music, poetry, journaling, politics, and campaigns to support and encourage treatment among the Black communities that served as a catalyst to help us think within political and cultural portals. Erica Martin Richards discloses, "Anyone can experience mental illness. There is no group, gender, sexual identity, race, or cultural belief that can prevent it from occurring. And it's happening at higher rates than most other illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer."[31] Women are twice as likely to experience an episode of major depression as men. And compared to their Caucasian counterparts, African American women are only half as likely to seek help.

I can remember my mother having a messy life through being cursed, having mental health issues, and substance abuse with alcohol. My mother was never able to rise against her untreated mental health issues and alcohol addiction. She quoted Jesus but was never afforded her freedom from mental health issues and substance abuse due to her

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[30] Lynette R. Holloway, "What Every Woman Should Know About Mental Health Ailments," *Ebony Magazine* (Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Company, Oct 2005), 154.

[31] Erica Martin Richards, "Mental Health Among African American Women," John Hopkins Medicine, https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/ men tal- health-among-african-american-women.

rejection of obeying God's law. It cursed my sister as well. She was life my mother in many ways. I was a victim of that same curse, but by the grace of God, after trying many other coping strategies unsuccessfully, I decided to follow God.

My mother and my sister never had health insurance and did not bother to go to the doctor because of the treatment they received due to being poor and not being insured. My mother's health decline was visible, and I prayed for her to get help. This only drove my mother and sister to make poor decisions. I could only love them unconditionally. The Lord allowed me to move forward in my life and be there for my mother and sister the best that I could. It does not feel good to ignore God's law, and He detests the prayers of a person who ignores his law. The gift of God afforded me life, and I am saved, filled with the Holy Ghost, and baptized in the name of Jesus.

Karen Allen reveals how substance abuse is a problem worldwide. She says, substance addiction is a major public health problem in the United States, and adverse consequences are manifested disproportionately among African Americans and women. A one-year prevalence study found that 9.5% of the total adult US population (15.1 million people) had an addictive disorder. An alcohol disorder was diagnosed among 3.1% ; of these, 1% had both alcohol and other drug abuse disorders. African Americans have a significantly higher rate of mental disorders than any other group.[32]

We must have those difficult conversations, as they are key factors in helping others identify when and how to seek help. When signs are seen among neighbors, family members, and even oneself, help may be available to these individuals. There is help in

[32] Karen Allen, "Barriers to Treatment for Addicted African American Women," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 87, no. 10 (October 1995): 751–756, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih. gov/articles/ PMC2607901/.

finding the resources needed to work through these challenging times. Depression is one of the top mental disorders and can pair with anxiety very quickly. A few symptoms to look for are individual withdrawal, somber mood, lack of interest and enjoyment in normal daily activities, loss of appetite, aches and pains, difficulty sleeping, feeling worthless, and thinking about death.

Ultimately, that last thought is not one we want to accept. Suicide is a serious concern, and if there are any concerns with individuals encountered, time must be taken to talk with them. Some signs to look for are when an individual threatens harm or death to themselves, talks or writes about death, acts recklessly, has no sense of purpose or reason for living, gives items away, and expresses hopelessness. The NSDUH Report recognizes that "understanding whether blacks with alcohol and illicit drug abuse problems seek and receive specialty treatment may help improve treatment and outreach programs for this population."[33]

To paraphrase Laura Schmidt, there is growing national attention to disparities in minority access to health care services, including services for alcohol problems. Studies show that, in recent years, alcohol problems and dependence have remained stable or even declined among whites. However, they have increased in America's largest minority groups, Hispanics and Blacks. Furthermore, national surveys found that only between nine and 15% of Americans with alcohol abuse or dependence have obtained treatment for the problem, suggesting a high level of unmet need overall.[34] In addition, Schmidt,

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[33] U.S Department of Health and Human Services, "Need for and Receipt of Substance Use Treatment Among Blacks," SAMSHA, https://www. samhsa.gov/data/sites /default/file s/NSDUH124/NSDUH124/sr124-african-american-treatment.pdf.

[34] Laura A. Schmidt, Yu Ye, Thomas K. Greenfield, and Jason Bond, "Ethnic Disparities in Clinical Severity and Services for Alcohol Problems: Results from the National Alcohol Survey," *Alcohol Clinical and Experimental Research* 31, no. 1 (January 2007): 48-56.

Ye, Greenfield, and Bond conclude that the national censuses of the treatment population suggest that Blacks and Hispanics may be over-represented in specialty services for substance abuse. Meanwhile, population-based surveys report inconsistent findings concerning minority utilization of care, which stems from the difficulties with researching minority access to care. Surveys often lack adequate numbers of minorities to study rare events, such as substance abuse treatment episodes. National censuses of the treatment population often over-represent public sector programs, potentially impacting the accuracy of patient counts broken down by race.[35]

Conclusion

The journey of understanding and treating mental illness has seen significant progress and profound challenges. From the mysticism of ancient civilizations to the scientific breakthroughs of the modern era, the evolution of mental health care reflects humanity's ongoing struggle to reconcile compassion with the limitations of understanding. By examining historical practices, the impact of societal norms, and the intersection of mental illness with substance use disorders, a clearer picture emerges of both the strides made and the work that remains.

Historically, mental illness was often misunderstood and feared. Ancient cultures attributed mental health issues to supernatural causes, resulting in treatments that ranged from the mystical to the cruel. Practices like trephination and exorcisms highlight the desperation and lack of scientific insight during these early periods. Over time, the influence of figures like Hippocrates and the advent of moral treatment shifted the

[35] Schmidt, Ye, Greenfield, and Bond, "Ethnic Disparities in Clinical Severity and Services for Alcohol Problems: Results from the National Alcohol Survey," *Alcohol Clinical and Experimental Research* 31, no. 1 (January 2007): 48-56.

narrative, emphasizing natural causes and humane care. These early advancements laid the groundwork for modern mental health practices but also revealed the pervasive stigma and systemic inequities that continue to affect care.

The plight of women in mental health treatment, particularly in the nineteenth century, underscores the intersection of gender, societal expectations, and medical biases. Women who defied conventional roles were often labeled as mad and subjected to institutionalization and harsh treatment. This historical marginalization has left a lasting impact on how women, especially African American women, experience mental health care today. The persistent stigma, lack of access to adequate care, and systemic barriers contribute to disparities in treatment outcomes. These issues are compounded when mental illness intersects with substance use disorders, creating a dual challenge that requires comprehensive, culturally sensitive approaches.

Today, the understanding of co-occurring disorders, the simultaneous presence of mental health and substance use disorders, is more robust than ever. Statistics indicate that nearly half of individuals with one disorder will experience the other in their lifetime. Despite this awareness, many barriers to effective treatment remain, particularly for marginalized groups. African American women, for example, face unique challenges, including trauma, poverty, and systemic inequities, which exacerbate mental health and substance use issues. Research highlights the need for trauma-informed, women-centered services that address these overlapping challenges holistically.

Faith-based recovery models, such as the twelve-step program proposed in this study, offer a promising avenue for addressing these complex issues. Because these programs are rooted in spiritual principles and community support, they can provide a

sense of purpose and connection for women navigating the dual challenges of mental illness and substance use. By integrating biblical teachings with evidence-based practices, such models can bridge gaps in care, particularly for African American women who may find resonance in spiritual approaches.

Despite advancements, significant challenges remain. The legacy of historical injustices and contemporary disparities in access to care highlights the urgent need for systemic change, which includes increasing funding for mental health services, addressing stigma through education, and implementing policies that promote equity in healthcare access. Furthermore, integrating telehealth and technology offers a promising solution to expand access, particularly in underserved rural areas.

The history of mental health treatment reveals a trajectory of progress tempered by persistent challenges. By learning from the past and addressing the systemic barriers that hinder equitable care, society can work toward a future where mental health treatment is accessible, compassionate, and effective for all. The proposed faith-based recovery model represents a step in this direction, emphasizing the importance of culturally sensitive, holistic approaches in addressing the unique needs of African American women with co-occurring disorders. Through such initiatives, the vision of comprehensive and equitable mental health care can become a reality.

The need for equitable mental health care is more pressing than ever. As we reflect on the history and challenges of mental health treatment, let us commit to being advocates for change. Healthcare providers, policymakers, and community leaders must prioritize creating systems that offer trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and accessible care. By embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and integrating holistic

approaches like the proposed faith-based recovery model, we can move closer to a world where mental health care truly serves everyone.

Addiction has been a constant companion on my journey. Understanding its history gives us valuable insights into its nature and effective ways to address it. As we move forward, we carry this knowledge with us, using it to forge more compassionate, effective, and evidence-based approaches to addiction in all its forms. The story of addiction is not just about the substances or behaviors that trap those suffering from this illness. It is about our fundamental human drive to seek pleasure, to escape pain, and to find meaning in our existence. By acknowledging and understanding these deep-seated motivations, we can hope to create a future where addiction no longer casts such a long shadow over human potential.

As I close this chapter, let us carry forward the knowledge we have gained and the empathy we have cultivated. The story of addiction is still being written, and each of us has the power to influence its narrative. We pursue a future where addiction is understood, treated effectively, and, ultimately, overcome.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Salvation plays a significant role in the spiritual growth of the seniors participating in the prime program at the Dayton Salvation Army. This program, designed specifically for seniors, is a testament to the church's value and respect for them. The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program, a comprehensive spiritual development initiative that includes regular Bible studies, prayer sessions, and community service activities, allows seniors to learn and participate in who God is. It empowers them with the tools to know Him more deeply and take on the responsibility of their spiritual journey, reinforcing their value and respect in the church.

This chapter delves into the transformative power of salvation, particularly for seniors undergoing spiritual transformation. It emphasizes that salvation is more than forgiveness and relational aspects; it involves a profound personal transformation through the Holy Spirit's power. As the divine agent of transformation, the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in engaging the audience and encouraging introspection about their spiritual journey, fostering a sense of enlightenment and introspection. Additionally, it aims to explore theological elements such as Soteriology, the study of salvation, and other critical soteriological concepts. These concepts shed light on the moral dimensions of salvation

and redemption in Christianity, providing a deeper understanding of the transformative power of salvation.

Dr. Peter Bellini has been a leading voice in the field of Christian healing and salvation. In his book, he says, "God heals and wills our healing, and that's the truth. This is what salvation is all about. Yet how easily we forget."[1] He goes on later to say, "Our world is inundated with wars, property, disease, economic crises, terrorism, unemployment, fatherlessness, addiction, violence, divorce, abortion, immorality, sex trafficking, abuse of all sorts, racism, depression, anxiety, hyper technology producing information and stimulation overload, and the list goes on."[2]

Subsequently, this study will offer specific methods, practices, and theologies, such as Soteriology and other theological perspectives, like Black Theology, Ecclesiology, and discipleship, that acknowledge the importance of grace, healing, and equipping the audience with the tools for their spiritual growth.

Soteriology and Its Importance in Christian Theology

Soteriology is the branch of Christian theology concerned with the study of salvation. It explores saved individuals, the nature of salvation, and the achievement of salvation through Christian beliefs. Soteriology holds significant importance in Christian theology for several reasons: 1. Soteriology delves into the nature of salvation, 2. Soteriology intersects with eschatology, and 3. Salvation explores the newness of life.

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[1] Peter J. Bellini, *Truth Therapy: Renewing Your Mind with the Word of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 1.

[2] Bellini, *Truth Therapy*, 5.

John G. Lake writes, "the ministry of the Christian is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He not only ministers words to another, but he ministers the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God that inhabits the words, that speaks to the spirit of another and reveals Christ in and through him."[3] The Holy Spirit wants us to know how God heals the sick and helps us understand the wonderful third person of the Trinity–the Holy Spirit–supported by sermons. *Pneumatology: Knowing The Holy Spirit* is a compilation of Lake's sermons on the Holy Spirit. It is filled with divine wisdom and revelation and designed to comfort and to reassure the audience about the powerful and comforting role of the Holy Spirit in healing.

Soteriology examines the nature of salvation, what it means to be saved, individuals who are saved, and salvation according to Christian doctrine. It provides insights into the transformative power of redemption and the hope it offers believers. Kim Hyonam explores the concept of "salvation by faith" and its significance in Christian theology. Hyonam's writing gives a crucial doctrine in Christian theology, emphasizing that salvation is a gift from God received through faith, not through works. Hyonam also articulates God's grace and personal faith, giving believers hope in their spiritual growth. It is not our work or worth that salvation is based upon; rather, our salvation is based on the actions of Jesus' atoning work and God's grace, love, and our belief, which can significantly impact our spiritual journey and growth.

According to Hyonam, "natural man cannot receive them because they are spiritual blessings peculiar to believers. Hyonam argues that in the applicatory work for salvation, God endows those who entered the covenant of grace by faith "with all those

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[3] John G. Lake, *Pneumatology: Knowing the Holy Spirit* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 156-57.

blessings by the Spirit such as ... justification, sanctification, glorification."[4] James W. Sire creates a different scenario. He asserts,

> In picturing the progress of the Christian life, the New Testament takes two parallel tracks. On the one hand, the new life begun at the new birth is a gift from God. It seems as if God is living in believers, changing them, molding them, transforming them into new persons, the ones they were designed to be from the beginning, fully reflecting God in all they do.[5]

According to Fred Klooster, the Holy Spirit is the quickening power in which Jesus Christ places a sinful man in His community and thus gives him freedom, in active self-giving to God and his fellows as God's witness, to correspond to the love in which God has drawn him to Himself and raised him, overcoming his sloth and misery.[6]

Lastly, God's plan for our salvation is continued by the identifying work of the Holy Spirit. Just as an official mark of a document as genuine, so the Holy Spirit's work within us guarantees our identity as God's adopted children. Jesus Christ and his saving work made all possible on our behalf. It becomes a reality when we place our faith in Him and the knowledge of God's love for us. Our understanding of God's love for us and the help He offers gives us reason for hope as we seek to overcome our problems and dependencies. When we trust God, we become part of His powerful solution to overcome sin in our world.[7] Because God "is rich in mercy and not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and turn from their sins, and gave us a new life in

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[4] Hyonam Kim, *Salvation by Faith: Faith, Covenant and the Order of Salvation in Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) (Reformed Historical Theology)* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 134.

[5] James W. Sire, *Beginning with God: A Basic Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Lisle, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 141.

[6] Fred H. Klooster, "Aspects of the Soteriology of Karl Barth," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1959): 6-14.

[7] Arterburn and Stoop, *NLT Life Recovery Bible*, 1435.

Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the one and only condition is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."[8]

Black Theology

I see myself as a Black theologian. One cannot learn Theology and practical politics together as I have and not be a Black theologian at heart. Black Theology has always provided me with the tools to reflect on and direct my practical struggles. These struggles have always been with other Black people in pursuit of liberation. That, for me, is the most fundamental characteristic of Black Theology. The Black theologians are political activists who reflect on their praxis. If one's theologies are without involvement, people will see one's faults. The struggle of Black people against oppression and for freedom is what Black Theology is about.[9]

Our salvation is not because of our righteousness but according to His mercy. He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Titus3:5-7 says, "This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."[10] We were washed clean the moment we were born again and made a new creation

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[8] Knowing Jesus, "What Does Titus 3:5 Mean?," Knowing Jesus, https://Dailyverse.Knowing-Jesus.com/titus-3-5.

[9] Basil Moore, "Learning from Black Theology," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 31, no. 1 (2018): 86–95, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26489084.

[10] Michael D. Coogan, "Titus 3:5-7," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2098.

in Christ by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Examining the historical significance of Black Theology, Raphael G. Warnock asks, "As an instrument through Jesus Christ, is the mission of the black church to save souls or to transform the social order? Or is it both? Is it called to be an evangelical church or a liberationist church?"[11] He argues that these questions have shaped the Black church history that gave new meaning to the civil rights and Black power movement, which he believes gave birth to Black Theology.

The rise of Black Theology, as an evangelical church, has a distinctive liberationist heritage and a peculiar eschatological consciousness. When confronted with the theological complexities of its self-understanding and asked what kind of church it desired to be. It is that issue, as it is shaped by the early context of Black Theology and emerges in the writings of Black and womanist theologians and Black pastors up to the present, that we give our attention.[12]

Consequently, Black Theology may struggle to provide meaningful insights into the nature of salvation in such a context, and it might be more prudent for Theology to focus on its domain rather than engaging with broader societal complexities.

Anthony Bradley explores a dialogue between politics and Theology on the Black experience. He chose Thomas Sowell, an economist, and James Cone, a theologian, to evaluate the Black Liberation Theology in contrast to political economy. He says,

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[11] Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014), 3, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=1463599&ppg=16http://site.ebrary.com/id/10776527.

[12] Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness,* 4.

> I hope to offer a social and economic analysis of black liberation theology, with James Cone, as the primary representative, using the social and economic theory of Thomas Sowell to outline the implications for social justice while incorporating a classical understanding of the nature of the human person.[13]

Bradley strategically tests how Black Liberation Theology fits in Sowell's position. How does Sowell's vision fit within a Black Theology? James Cone's Theology is historically connected to oppression. He believes that this God is the God of the oppressed and is only for those who come from an oppressed person, directly or indirectly. Sowell's interpretation of oppression demonstrates Christ's redemption is for everyone in the world, not just people of color. Why? Because all people have a history of being oppressed and oppressors. He states, "in order for black liberation to move forward in ways that inform social and political liberation, it will require a greater interaction with economic theory."[14] Bradley offers a dialogue that strengthens each discipline of theology and economics, thus creating a vision for the economic sustainability of the Black community.

Ecclesiology

"All who know God's salvation know it as members of the body of Christ."[15] Marsh Clive reflects on our relationship with God and others, "Salvation is

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[13] Anthony B. Bradley, *The Political Economy of Liberation: Thomas Sowell and James Cone on the Black Experience* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2012), xii, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=1055428&ppg=41.

[14] Bradley, *The Political Economy of Liberation: Thomas Sowell and James Cone on the Black Experience*, xv.

[15] Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 57.

everywhere."[16] I agree because the concept of salvation seems to be ever-present. People often talk about redeeming themselves or making amends for their actions as if salvation is within reach through these efforts. As a recovering addict, I found my salvation through the support of loved ones and social community support meetings. These instances highlight how the idea of salvation permeates various aspects of our lives and collective experiences.

He goes on to say, **"**salvation is also evident everywhere by its lack."[17] The argument suggests that the concept of salvation, traditionally rooted in religious belief, has lost much of its relevance and meaning in a secularized society. The ongoing presence of evil and suffering in the world casts doubt on universal salvation or redemption. Without a belief in God, salvation becomes a purely human endeavor, where individuals must rely on themselves or others for rescue or deliverance.

Noted theologian Andrew Parks states,

> The good news of Jesus Christ should be real good news to everybody. Demanding repentance of sin from the abused, the hungry, and the humiliated is not good news but absurd news. To be reasonable to these wounded Christians, we must present a more comprehensive picture of Christian analysis of wrongs than the simple formula of sin-repentance.[18]

I aim to build confidence in people and help them see hope through a faith-based model of the twelve recovery steps, finding refuge in Psalms 27:1, which says, "The Lord is my

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[16] Clive Marsh, *A Cultural Theology of Salvation* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2018), 1, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=191819.

[17] Clive Marsh, *A Cultural Theology of Salvation* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2018), 1, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=191819.

[18] Andrew Sung Park and Susan L. Nelson, *The Other Side of Sin: Woundedness from the Perspective of the Sinned-Against* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), 5.

light and my salvation; whom shall, I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"[19]

Few concepts evoke as much contemplation, debate, and fervor in the vast tapestry of human existence as salvation. It is a notion that transcends religious boundaries, permeating the very essence of humanity with its promise of deliverance, renewal, and ultimate fulfillment. Whether sought through spiritual devotion, personal growth, or acts of altruism, the quest for salvation manifests in a myriad of forms, each imbued with its unique meaning and significance.

At its core, salvation embodies the universal yearning for redemption—a longing to transcend the limitations of mortality and connect with something greater than oneself. Rooted in the depths of human consciousness, this desire for salvation stems from an innate recognition of our impermanence and a primal instinct to seek meaning amidst the chaos of existence. It is a quest that spans cultures, civilizations, and epochs, echoing through the annals of history as humanity grapples with the timeless questions of purpose, morality, and transcendence.

The Church at Its Core

What does it mean to be the church? Throughout history, the church has been a primary conduit for pursuing salvation, offering doctrines, rituals, and spiritual practices to guide believers toward enlightenment and liberation. Through prayer, meditation, and acts of devotion, adherents seek to cultivate virtues, overcome worldly desires, and forge a deeper connection with the divine, thereby paving the way for their salvation.

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[19] Michael D. Coogan, "Psalm 27:1," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 794.

Philosophers have grappled with its nature, exploring its implications for ethics, metaphysics, and the human condition. From the existentialist quest for individual authenticity to the utilitarian pursuit of the greatest good, philosophical inquiries into salvation reveal the diversity of human aspirations and the myriad paths toward fulfillment.

Moreover, the church finds expression in human relationships, where compassion, forgiveness, and love serve as vehicles for personal and collective transformation. Diane Leclerc and Mark A. Maddix state, "We form alliances in business, on playgrounds, and reality television shows. We create partnerships, in business and in play, and we sustain these partnerships as long as they are profitable."[20] Through acts of kindness and empathy, individuals strive to alleviate suffering, mend broken bonds, and foster a sense of unity and belonging that transcends the boundaries of self-interest. In these moments of connection and solidarity, the seeds of salvation are sown, nurturing the potential for redemption and renewal amidst the complexities of human existence.

The pursuit of the church has taken on new dimensions shaped by globalization, technology, and cultural exchange. As communities become increasingly interconnected, they transcend the geographical and cultural boundaries, fostering a more global dialogue on the meaning and significance of human existence. Through exchanging ideas, values, and experiences, individuals seek to navigate the complexities of identity, belief, and purpose in an ever-changing world, forging connections that bridge the divides of race,

[20] Diane Leclerc and Mark A. Maddix, *Essential Church: A Wesleyan Ecclesiology* (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2024), 29, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=3379760&ppg=26.

religion, and ideology. How can we deny the status of being church to other communities simply because they have a different structure of governance?[21]

Discipleship and Its Implications

Discipleship remains deeply personal, and it is shaped by each individual's unique circumstances, experiences, and aspirations. Whether through epiphany, hardship, or grace, the journey is marked by moments of profound significance illuminating the path ahead. It is a journey of self-discovery and transformation, where the pursuit of meaning and purpose intertwines with the search for redemption and renewal.

Discipleship is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit — a testament to our capacity to transcend suffering, embrace uncertainty, and find meaning amidst the chaos of existence. Whether through faith, philosophy, or human connection, it beckons us to venture beyond the confines of our limitations, explore the depths of our souls, and discover the infinite possibilities that lie within. In this journey beyond redemption, we find deliverance from the trials of life and a profound sense of connection, purpose, and wholeness that transcends the boundaries of time and space.

Shaping this project, "Enhancing the Relationship with God: An Interdisciplinary Approach," will bring attention to existing knowledge of how these theological approaches and practices will establish "a church with an integrated mission to save souls, grow saints, and serve suffering humanity."[22] I also hope that the theological

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[21] Neil Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church: An Experiment in Systematic-Historical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 3, https://muse-jhu-edu.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/pub/261/monograph/chapter/1081666.

[22] Denis Metrustery, *Saved, Sanctified and Serving: Perspectives on Salvation Army Theology and Practice* (Cumbria, UK: Authentic Publishers, 2016), 19, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=4592023&ppg=19.

developments will include a greater understanding of the role of the SA and its programs in servitude and mission.

The Roots of the Salvation Army: Its Theological Implications

The Founder of the Salvation Army

The SA was founded in 1865 by a man named William Booth. He helped many suffering individuals throughout London who did not attend or were not welcome in a traditional church. Thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and alcoholics were among Booth's first converts to Christianity. As his ministry grew, these converts spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ far and wide to the poor, the vulnerable, and the destitute. Booth died in 1912, but he had established a foundation for lifesaving work that the SA continues to perform today in more than 130 countries.

Booth abandoned the traditional church pulpit and took the Gospel directly to the people, preaching to the poor, the vulnerable, and the destitute in the streets of London. Catherine Booth, his wife, was known as the "Army Mother." Women had few rights in society and held minimal responsibility in church leadership. Working with her husband, Catherine established a place in society as an evangelist, a preacher, a theologian, and co-founder of the SA. Together, they created a legacy of service, love, and sacrifice that shaped today's SA.

Andrew Mark Eason writes, "The Salvation Army did not allow itself to be constrained by ecclesiastical methods of its day. Instead of accepting preexisting measures that focused on getting the poor into the churches, Salvationists developed

strategies that brought the church's message to the poor."[23] Men and women work together deconstructing the social and religious image of femininity versus masculinity, which tells us a great deal about the purpose of the SA and the Salvationists. Andrew Eason also says, "The conversion of the world required the effort of men and women, even in the area of preaching, but the pragmatism driving this activity did not ensure a place for women once the winds of revivalism abated."[24] In other words, this movement presented opportunities and obstacles. Although William and Catherine Booth faced many challenges, they continued to carry on the vision of creating a place that served all and not just a select few.

William and Catherine Booth's Strategy

It was not the Booths' intention to start a new church. Many prevailing churches failed to comfort the non-church attendants or save lost souls. The Booths developed a mission to reach out to people experiencing poverty and build a model of servitude. They started with a strategy to train converts who helped in their mission. They sent out with evangelists who ministered to those of a similar background, moved toward making disciples, and identified a perspective that the church must face as we move forward.[25]

William and Catherine Booth are a living flame in the hearts of men and women. First, there was an idea germinating in the heart of God. Then came a living flame in the

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[23] Andrew Mark Eason, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003), 4, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=772398&ppg=16.

[24] Eason, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army,* 30.

[25] Eason, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army,* 30.

hearts of man and woman, William and Catherine Booth. Then a compelling vision claiming the devotion of a growing Army of Salvation spreading across the world.[26]

They generated difficult conversations that questioned the role of the churches of the time, their purpose in the community, and why churches had to wrestle with these questions. Everyone was encouraged to explore scripture, engage in respectful dialogue, and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance. Their initiatives still invite us to embrace God's grace, respond in faith, and live out the transformative implications of redemption.

Rick Warren writes, "If you want God's blessing on your life and to be known as a child of God, you must learn to be a peacemaker. Jesus said, 'God bless those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.'"[27] In addition, Warren stressed how conflict becomes ingrained in what we want and not what we need. He says, "Most conflict is rooted in unmet needs. Some of these needs can only be met by God. When you expect anyone – a friend, spouse, boss, or family member – to meet a need that only God can fulfill, you are setting yourself up for disappointment and bitterness. No one can meet all of your needs except God."[28]

The Vision of the Salvation Army in the Twenty-First Century

Throughout church history, God has called individuals to serve Him, transcending the commitment to a simple church membership. The Apostle Paul speaks of leadership within the church, "to prepare God's people for work of service." It invites us to live each

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[26] Paul A. Radar, "Vision," in *Hallmark of the Salvation Army* (Blackburn, AUS: Salvo Publishing, 2009), 65.

[27] Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 153.

[28] Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life,* 154.

day not striving for approval but overflowing with gratitude for this unconditional welcome. This should shape our words and influence others. It is about paying it forward with unconditional love to everyone we meet with kindness and God's grace. Paul shows us that we are living proof that love does not demand perfection, just an open heart in a world quick to judge and slow to forgive. I can think back to when I felt hopeless from God's perspective. I was in a dead-end situation because I went through my obstacles without the knowledge of Christ Jesus. At that time, God closed that door, and then He opened my heart to His plan of salvation, rather than me relying on my own abilities.

Part of my project is about God's grace, mercy, and guidance which extend beyond the confines of the church walls, reaching out to those in the community through servitude, advocacy, and leadership. Just as the Booths and their disciples were engaged in ministries of compassion and mercy, serving the marginalized, the oppressed, and the disenfranchised with humility and empathy, we can do the same, whether by feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, or advocating for the vulnerable. The church represents Christ's call to love our neighbors as ourselves, bearing witness to the spiritual transformation in action. The SA qualifies as a church in its own right. In some countries, it is considered a part of a social service agency rather than a church.[29] Among the trials and tribulations, the SA offers hope, reminding everyone of God's love in times of grief, weakness, and uncertainty, reiterating that they are never alone. John Larsson says, "The Army has tended to consider its theology as something that was settled once and for all by William Booth and that there is therefore nothing more to be said about it. But ...

[29] Anonymous, *Servants Together: Salvationists' Perspectives on Ministry* (London, UK: Salvation Army International, 2002), 76-77.

unless that theology is made to come alive in each generation, it loses its power to impel action."[30] Even now, the SA offers prayers, counsel, and support.

People discover the depth of God's mercy and compassion, finding healing and wholeness in embracing Christ's love. The aim here is to outline the theological concept of this project, "Enhancing the Relationship with God: An Interdisciplinary Approach," which offers a broader perspective on the SA and its role in the community. Throughout the years, social demographics have changed.

Conclusion

As part of this assignment, I have developed theological concepts such as Soteriology, Black Theology, and Ecclesiology, and explored how they each relate to the church and the community. Each of these areas presents unique, profound, and sometimes challenging insights into the nature and mission of the Church. They help deepen the church's understanding of its purpose, its people, and its call to service in the world.

Soteriology stands out as a fundamental aspect of Christian Theology that explores the nature, means, and implications of salvation. It plays a central role in shaping Christian beliefs, practices, and worldviews, influencing how individuals relate to God and each other. Soteriology seeks to answer critical questions such as: How is humanity saved? What role does Jesus Christ play in salvation? What is required of believers in response to God's saving grace?

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[30] John Larsson, "Salvationist Theology and Ethics for the New Millennium," *Words and Deeds* 4, no. 1 (November 2001): 10.

In the life of the church and the community, Soteriology shapes how the church aids in individuals' spiritual journeys. It provides a framework for theological understanding and pastoral care, encouraging believers to grow deeper in faith and assurance of their salvation. The church, therefore, becomes both a nurturing space for faith development and an active agent of God's saving work in the world, offering hope, healing, and reconciliation to individuals who seek a meaningful relationship with God.

Turning to Ecclesiology, it is the branch of theology that specifically deals with the study of the Church. It prompts essential questions, including: What is the Church? What are the functions of the Church? and What are the beliefs of the Church? Ecclesiology explores the nature, purpose, and structure of the Church, grounding these aspects in scripture, tradition, and theological reflection. It encapsulates the principles of shepherding, fostering cohesion, and cultivating a vibrant Christian community. Ecclesiology highlights the Church’s responsibility to provide spiritual leadership, pastoral care, teaching, and support, helping individuals and congregations navigate life's challenges through a Christ-centered approach.

Ecclesiology also emphasizes the importance of solidarity, unity, and mutual love among believers. Recognizing their shared faith in Jesus Christ as the foundation for cooperation, Ecclesiology teaches that believers are called to respect, serve, and uplift one another, thereby creating a reflection of God's kingdom on earth. This unity is not only for the sake of the church's internal community but also to bear witness to the transformative power of the Gospel in the wider world.

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to respond to God's love, quickens their hearts to serve, and enables them to live as faithful witnesses. According to Karl Barth,

the Holy Spirit is the quickening power through which Jesus Christ brings a sinful man into His community. Understanding these theological concepts is especially important for ministries such as the Prime Seniors Tuesday Program at the Dayton Salvation Army. Here, salvation is not merely a doctrinal point but a living reality that plays a significant role in the spiritual growth of the seniors participating. By deepening their understanding of salvation (Soteriology) and their connection to the community of believers (Ecclesiology), seniors can experience renewal in their faith journeys. They are encouraged to grow not only individually but collectively, finding strength, comfort, and joy in their walk with God and with one another.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Enhancing a relationship with God begins with prayer. It is a process that takes practice, which may not be perfect, and one size does not fit all. I will create an interdisciplinary approach that will focus on key fundamentals, including: how to build a relationship with God, personal growth and well-being, spiritual development.

Let us revisit General William Booth, the founder of the SA, and his vision to create a ministry that goes directly to the people rather than remain within the four walls of the traditional church. Along with his wife, Catherine, he left the traditional church model and took the Gospel to the streets, preaching to anyone who would listen throughout England, UK. In 1852, it was an unconventional approach. In 1865, they returned to London, UK, accompanied by many followers. They created an organization called The Christian Mission more than 1,000 volunteers and evangelists. “Thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and drunkards were among their first converts to Christianity. And soon, those converts were also preaching and singing in the streets as living testimonies to the power of God.”[1] These were people who did not attend church and were not welcome in church.

[1] The Salvation Army USA, “History of the Salvation Army.” Salvation Army USA, https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/history-of-the-salvation-army/.

In 1878, the mission became the Salvation Army. Since that time, the SA many has created many different programs to promote a commitment to love for all, diversity, and a worldwide movement. Booth laid the foundation for the SA. He died in 1912, and yet his mission continues to exist in more than 100 countries. This project will focus on the Prime Seniors Tuesday Program in Dayton, Ohio.

The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program, a crucial initiative designed to foster a deeper connection with God, is of great importance for the personal growth, well-being, and spiritual development of its participants. The participants, who are seniors from the Dayton Salvation Army, play a vital role in this program. They learn how to participate in who God is and are equipped with the tools to recognize Him. Their unique experiences and insights will contribute to the success of this project. With my guidance, they will gain valuable insights into how their attachment styles impact their relationships with God. This understanding will help me gather evidence to enhance these relationships, so I can then offer a promising path to a deeper understanding of human spirituality and greater recognition of the role of attachment in shaping their relationship with the divine. This journey of self-discovery and spiritual growth holds the potential to inspire and uplift the seniors, enriching their intellectual understanding of these complex concepts.

Wayne Oates, the author of *Behind the Masks: Personality Disorders in Religious Behavior* proposes, "The treasures of the biblical and historical Christian experience of this large spectrum of human suffering and stubbornness of mind are constant."[2] Oates describes the psychological understanding of many in several collective personality disorders that make interaction so tricky. In addition, he investigates why individuals

[2] Oates, *Behind the Masks*, 9.

develop as they do and how personality disorders can lead to negative religious behavior. He unmasks these disorders using the pastoral care approach, showing how transformation can begin. My aim with this project is to prevent, affect, and manage personality disorders.

The interdisciplinary foundation approach integrates psychological, sociological, and educational concepts and is crucial in comprehensively understanding the complex dynamics involved in seniors' relationships with God. The findings from this project, in which participants and observers play a pivotal role, will have significant implications for developing programs and interventions to foster a deeper connection with God among seniors. Their involvement is not just appreciated, but it is essential for the success of this initiative.

Participants' contributions are significant and valued, and they will shape the future of our senior programs. According to Annette Marche:

> In 1995, seniors made up 12% of the population. It is estimated that by 2041, about 23% of the population will be over 65. Statistics show that seniors tend to be very involved in religious activity and are most likely to attend religious functions on a regular basis. Given the increase in our senior population, and the importance of religious involvement for seniors, it is timely that further consideration be given to the spiritual care needs of this growing population.[3]

Marche defines religion with both a negative and positive approach in relation to senior citizen health. I will explore the interdisciplinary theory of personality disorders in religious behavior and its application to enhance the relationship between seniors and God, influencing their relationships throughout life. I will provide seniors with the opportunity to discuss these important issues. Being present and listening to seniors is a

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[3] Annette Marche, "Religion, Health, and the Care of Seniors," *Counselling, Psychotherapy, and Health* 2, no. 1 (April 2006): 50, https://www.acrjournal.com.au/resources/assets/journals/Volume-2-Issue-1-2006/V2_I1_Marche_50-61_04_06.pdf.

vital service, particularly in supporting their emotions. Marche suggests that "religious coping strategies might also include reading scripture, prayer, meditation, religious beliefs, and community support. These methods of coping have been employed by seniors to deal with stress, illness, disability, dying, bereavement, social isolation, and the impact that their changing role in society can have on their lives."[4] Teaching seniors coping skills will help them develop and nurture a deeper relationship with God. By meeting their needs, the program will help them develop spiritually.

Andrew Clark summarizes happiness by income, human relationships, and mental health. Each theory offers an important factor that may affect one's emotional health. He states, "if we go back to childhood and ask what is the best predictor of an enjoyable adult life, the best predictor is the child's emotional health, which, with the child's behavior, is significantly more important than all the qualifications the person ever obtains. And finally, children are of course affected by their parents (especially their mother's mental health). But schools and individual teachers also have an enduring impact."[5]

Fostering a Connection with God

This issue is deeply personal, as I have been surrounded by discussions about God throughout my life. A more profound connection with God involves cultivating a personal, intentional, and rooted spiritual growth relationship. Essential practices to

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[4] Annette Marche, "Religion, Health, and the Care of Seniors," *Counselling, Psychotherapy, and Health* 2, no. 1 (April 2006): 54, https://www.acrjournal.com.au/resources/assets/journals/Volume-2-Issue-1-2006/V2_I1_Marche_50-61_04_06.pdf.

[5] Andrew Clark et al, "Happiness Over the Life Course: What Matters Most?" in *The Origins of Happiness: The Science of Well-Being Over the Life Course* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 29-30, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvd58t1t.5.

deepen this connection include regular prayer, where one openly communicates with God, sharing thoughts, personal struggles, and gratitude. Martha S. Bergen suggests, "spiritual maturity among older adults is not automatic. The achievement of this most significant and worthy goal is, in part, an individual's choice."[6]

The SA, part of the evangelical part of the Universal Christian Church, is intentional about prioritizing a ministry that reflects the framework and context of the church, like a foundation for service and fellowship. Studying religious texts like the Bible or other sacred writings provides wisdom and insight into God's nature and guidance for living. Meditation or quiet reflection allows one to listen for God's presence and find peace in His guidance.

Engaging with a faith community is also essential, as it provides support, accountability, and opportunities for collective worship and service. Acts of service and charity reflect God's love in action, fostering compassion and humility. Lastly, practicing gratitude and mindfulness helps one recognize God's work in everyday life, creating a deeper sense of purpose, joy, and spiritual awareness. Over time, these practices cultivate a more profound, resilient connection with God that grows through life's experiences. James H. Cone suggests that "the reality of God is presupposed in black theology. Black theology is an attempt to analyze the nature of that reality, asking what we can say about the nature of God in view of God's self-disclosure in biblical history and the oppressed condition of black Americans."[7]

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[6] Martha S. Bergen, "A Christian Education for the Spiritual Growth of Senior Adults," in *Practical Theology for Aging* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 127, https://ebookcentral-proquest- com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=1112450&ppg=138.

[7] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 34, ttps://research-ebsco-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink?id=087022dd-b4b6-3d1e-ab37-c706d328d8dc.

Scripture talks about what we must draw upon. We begin to realize that we need a force outside of ourselves. We must understand that there is nothing within ourselves that we can do, but the Spirit is what draws us to a sound teaching, and God has called that individual to preach the Gospel. Look at Samuel's life; he was in church and the temple and did not know that the voice calling him was God. Scripture says that they who "thirst after righteousness shall be filled."[8]

Biblical Connection with God

H.G. Koenig suggests that "reading of scripture can also be a source of emotional comfort for an elderly person suffering from pain or disability.[9] Koenig also states, "scriptural passages that provide role models for seniors, particularly in relation to dealing with suffering, have been reported to be a valuable coping strategy for some seniors."[10] Examining the relationship between mental health and religion will help us understand the physical needs of older adults and the impact of religion as a resource.

The biblical passage chosen for this project is Psalm 27:1-14, which reads:

> The Lord is my light and my salvation; who shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoer assail me to devour my flesh, my adversaries, and foes, they shall stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident. One thing I asked of the lord that will I seek after to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock. Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent

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[8] Michael D. Coogan, "Matthew 5:6," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1753.

[9] H. G. Koenig, *Aging and God: Spiritual Pathways to Mental Health in Midlife and Later Years* (Pittsburgh, PA: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1994), 41.

[10] Koenig, *Aging and God*, 41.

> sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD. Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation! If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing in out violence. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the lord.[11]!

Psalm 27 is about God being the protector of those who seek his presence. The natural response should be to trust in Him. God is teaching and demonstrating His glorious power. Believers are lifted with Him to walk, talk, trust, and serve Him in every experience. The participants of this program can seek God's presence through the Gospel; engaging with a faith community and providing support, accountability, and opportunities for collective worship and service are essential. Jesus is returning, so the psalmist concluded, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"[12]

Tajuan Hyche-Kyles reinforces growth through self-esteem, self-worth, awareness, and education. She acknowledges, "the problem was having a membership of members who have a poor self-image made it very unlikely that they would buy in, pivot, or commit to any revitalization plan."[13] Acts of service and charity reflect God's love in action, fostering compassion and humility.

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[11] Michael D. Coogan, "Psalms 27:1-14," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 794-795.

[12] Michael D. Coogan, "Psalms 27:14," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 795.

[13] Tajuan Hyche-Kyles, "You Still Got Worth: A Plan for Revitalizing an Elderly Congregation," (PhD diss., United Theological Seminary, Dayton, 2023), 2, https://archive.org/details/tajuan-hyche-kyles-dmin- 2023.

Practicing gratitude and mindfulness helps one recognize God's work in everyday life, creating a deeper sense of purpose, joy, and spiritual awareness. Over time, these practices cultivate a more profound, resilient connection with God that grows through life's experiences. James Cone proposes, "the reality of God is presupposed in black theology. Black theology is an attempt to analyze the nature of that reality, asking what we can say about the nature of God in view of God's self-disclosure in biblical history and the oppressed condition of black Americans."[14] Cone offers a creative approach and maybe a radical presentation of our connection to God from the viewpoint of the oppressed and exploited Black community.

Connecting with God is about building a meaningful relationship through practices like prayer, meditation, studying sacred texts, and engaging in acts of love and service. This connection deepens as one listens, reflects, and stays open to God's presence, finding peace, purpose, and guidance. Being part of a faith community also nurtures this bond, creating a supportive environment for spiritual growth. In addition, Cone points out that "Black theology affirms that there is nothing special about the English word "God" in itself. What is important is the dimension of reality to which it points."[15] In reality, Black people brought their religion with them. They then accepted the White plantation owners' interpretation of who God was, and it reshaped their religious beliefs and faith. As a result, their beliefs regarding their traditional and cultural structure of religion were changed. However, many stuck to religious principles because prayer structured their lives around it.

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[14] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 34.

[15] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 34.

Dosia Carlson states, "spiritual well-being is the affirmation of life in relationships with God, self, community, and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness."[16] Carlson suggests that many of the same people who have mentioned this statement now seem restless and reconsider the definition of spirituality in later years. Human beings want a sense of purpose, which remains a paramount issue. Retired Baptist minister Robert E. Seymour writes, "no doubt a part of the reason older people turn to spirituality is to satisfy their search for meaning."[17] Spirituality is an essential part of who we are.

Steps to Personal Growth and Well-Being

God has given us all these tools to grow. God has given us everything we need. In 2 Peter 1:3, the message is the same as in Psalm 27:1-14. Peter reveals, "His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by ~~H~~His own glory and goodness."[18] Jesus commissioned His disciples to record what He had said. Our growth and well-being become a process. Age is just a number and does not matter. Robert Atchley summarizes it, saying, "focusing on nourishing souls represents a way of emphasizing a lifelong process rather than an end product."[19] It is about connecting with our past and learning to be consciously aware of human experiences.

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[16] Dosia Carlson, *Engaging in Ministry with Older Adults* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Alban Institute, 1998), 51, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=1744472&ppg=66.

[17] Robert E. Seymour, *Aging without Apology: Living the Senior Years with Integrity and Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1995), 75.

[18] Michael D. Coogan, "2 Peter 1:3," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2133.

[19] Robert Atchley, *Spirituality and Aging* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 2009), 21.

My project is not just about creating a new identity; it is about connecting seniors with their past and cultivating their God-given gifts as a means of forgiving themselves through prayer, reading scripture, and developing a relationship with God. Forbes Winslow acknowledges that we should embrace aging. It is a gift and testimony of God's grace. With my project, I aspire to gain sight of unlimited opportunities and witness faith in others because of our promise in Jesus Christ. Each weekly session will remind seniors that aging leads us all to the foot of the cross.[20] Prayer is a direct line of communication, enabling individuals to express gratitude, seek guidance, and find comfort in God's presence. Meditation fosters stillness and awareness, helping individuals listen to God's voice and align their thoughts with divine wisdom. Scripture enriches this connection by offering insights, teachings, and encouragement that provide a foundation for faith-based living.

Joining a faith community also offers vital support for spiritual growth. Shared worship creates a sense of unity and reinforces the communal aspect of faith. For example, worship services, small groups, and Bible studies offer opportunities for collective reflection and mutual encouragement. Being part of a faith community also establishes accountability, inspiring individuals to remain committed to their spiritual practices. When people gather in worship and fellowship, they experience the joy of shared faith, which strengthens their resolve and deepens their understanding of God's love.

Gerald and Betty Winslow have suggested guidelines for praying with patients: first, gain an understanding of the person's spiritual needs; second, pray only with

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[20] Forbes Winslow, *Within Sight of Home: Inspirational Meditations on Aging* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 102.

permission; third, spiritual practices must be voluntary; fourth, be aware of and appreciate your own spirituality; and finally, spiritual care requires preserving.[21]

Increased spiritual well-being often leads to positive outcomes like greater inner peace, improved emotional resilience, and a stronger sense of purpose. It enhances mental health by reducing stress and anxiety and promotes feelings of connection, gratitude, and compassion. Spiritually well-rounded individuals experience healthier relationships, make value-driven decisions, and find meaning even in challenges, leading to a more fulfilling and balanced life. Hyche-Kyles observes, "although self-esteem is having confidence in yourself it also includes a set of beliefs including pride, the acknowledgment of accomplishments, and value."[22] She suggests considering senior citizens' spiritual lives over time, especially the importance of understanding, listening, and interpreting what elders say about their spiritual lives. One must realize that some older people may embrace a form of belief that functions like a religion but may not fit the views of what religion is. This project is to work together so that we all may appreciate the complexities of how seniors see religion and spirituality.

Have seniors forgotten their God-given gifts? Have their past mistakes blindsided them? And how can we, as Christ's messengers, guide them, support them, and help them see the purpose of this senior program? Whatever gifts God has given them, whether in church or groups, they are becoming proactive people. Whatever God has placed in their hearts, as participants of this program, we anticipate an increase in spiritual well-being,

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[21] Gerald R. Winslow and Betty W. Winslow, "Examining the Ethics of Praying with Patients," *Holistic Nursing Practice* 17, no. 4 (July 2003): 170-177, https://doi.org/10.1097/00004650-200307000-00002.

[22] Hyche-Kyles, "You Still Got Worth: A Plan for Revitalizing an Elderly Congregation," 62.

which often leads to a cascade of positive outcomes that significantly enhance one's quality of life. One of the most profound benefits is the cultivation of greater inner peace, calm, and centeredness, which helps individuals navigate life's challenges gracefully. People will develop improved emotional resilience and recover from setbacks more effectively, as well as a stronger sense of purpose, which gives direction and meaning to one's actions and decisions.

Enhanced spiritual well-being also contributes to better mental health. By fostering practices like meditation, prayer, or mindfulness, individuals can experience a noticeable reduction in stress and anxiety. These practices promote feelings of connection to oneself, others, and the greater universe while nurturing gratitude and compassion. Positive emotions lay the groundwork for healthier relationships, as individuals are more empathetic, patient, and understanding. Spiritually, people tend to make decisions that reflect their core values, aligning their actions with a greater purpose, which helps them find meaning even during difficult times. This balance leads to a fulfilling life of authenticity and clarity.

Self-esteem plays a crucial role in spiritual and emotional well-being. It is also about recognizing our worth, accepting accomplishments, and acknowledging inherent values. Healthy self-esteem strengthens individuals' ability to serve others, enabling them to act humbly and confidently. And as one's spiritual well-being deepens, the desire to contribute positively to the community grows.

However, cultivating spiritual growth is not enough. True spiritual well-being manifests through action. Genuine faith comes from and through deeds and service. Whether through volunteering at church, community outreach, or simply helping others

in daily life, meaningful action is an extension of one's spiritual beliefs. Serving others with the gifts God has bestowed upon us demonstrates faith in practice. I hope to better equip and embody faith through this project when we uplift and support others proactively. By aligning faith with action, we create a life where belief and behavior reinforce each other. Faith shines through works, and works find meaning through faith, forming a cycle that nurtures personal growth and collective well-being.

Acts of service and gratitude cultivate a compassionate mindset that aligns with God's love. By consistently practicing these habits, individuals deepen their faith, strengthen their relationship with God, and enrich their spiritual journey. Harry R. Moody states, "the practice of listening is so important that it suggests a need to find creative interventions that can help staff become better listeners."[23] Listening is also an integral part of this spiritual journey.

Just as attentive listening can improve relationships with others, it is essential for connecting with God. Listening requires patience, openness, and humility during prayer, meditation, or conversations within a faith community. In a world that often prioritizes speech over listening, there is a growing need to develop creative interventions that help individuals and even staff within faith-based organizations become better listeners. This skill enhances understanding, empathy, and communication, strengthening one's connection with God and others. Individuals create a rich tapestry of spiritual growth by weaving together these practices: prayer, meditation, Bible study, community involvement, service, gratitude, and listening. Through consistent effort and commitment,

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[23] Harry R. Moody, "What Do We Know about Religion and Aging?" in *Religion, Spirituality, and Aging: A Social Work Perspective* (Oxford, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 6, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=1099167&ppg=21.

they foster a deeper connection with God and walk a path illuminated by faith, love, and purpose.

The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program aims to help seniors find words to express their search for meaning and communication. The staff can develop a deeper connection that requires intention, dedication, and consistency through listening, therefore allowing each individual to grow in their faith and engage in regular practices, such as prayer, meditation, and bible study. These practices create essential space for reflection, allowing individuals to quiet the noise of daily life and focus on connecting with themselves and God. Furthermore, only by looking inward can we help frail elders in need, but if we allow the older person to enter their own lives, seniors can transform themselves, and we will help them see with new eyes. We want to capture the voice of a senior's search for meaning.

Eugene Bianchi reminds us that elders are our future selves. He concludes, "the wisdom of age begins to blur all boundaries between religion and spirituality, between self and world, between losses and gains. Perhaps the message is that whether in youth or age, it is not the arriving but the journey itself which counts,"[24] while systematically breaking down social relationships and how they affect identity, fear, sexuality, the church, faith, suffering, and hope. In addition, Bianchi candidly reflects on their early childhood years, personal traumas, career choices, midlife changes, experiences of old age, and death, all part of the human spiritual dilemmas of the aging cycle.

God often asks us to look within ourselves, to see beyond what the world tells us, and to discover His plan for our lives. When you stand in front of the mirror and do not

[24] Eugene Bianchi, *Aging as a Spiritual Journey* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 64.

like what you see, that moment is a call to go deeper. It is an invitation to seek God's presence, to ask for His guidance, and to trust that He can restore what feels broken. Only the individual can honestly assess where he or she is spiritually, emotionally, and physically. This self-assessment is personal, and it demands honesty, vulnerability, and a willingness to surrender.

Self-assessment is an opportunity to turn to God. God does not want anyone to live in defeat. He wants everyone to live out the purpose He has planned for them. Even in dire circumstances, God's promise of life and hope remains ongoing. It is more than an affirmation; it is a declaration of faith. It signifies a willingness to trust God's ability to transform your reality. After seven weeks, I hope the seniors participating will see the truth and make themselves available for God to use them in any capacity.

Spiritual Development

Leaders and participants must remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, trusting in God's power to transform hearts and lives. This program emphasizes reflection, listening, and personal accountability, ensuring seniors can actively participate in spiritual development. The work done through the Prime Seniors Tuesday Program has implications beyond its immediate participants. Modeling how to engage with seniors in meaningful and transformative ways sets a standard for future ministries and interventions. This project highlights the importance of seeing seniors as recipients of care and active contributors to the faith community. It underscores the transformative power of spirituality in improving emotional, mental, and social well-being.

Ultimately, the relationship with God is about surrender, trust, and action. It is cultivated through deliberate practices, strengthened in community, and sustained by the truths found in scripture. The journey is not without challenges, but the tools and principles shared through this program provide a path for seniors to grow closer to God, living with purpose and joy in their later years. In fostering these connections, we enhance individual lives and reflect the fullness of God's love and grace in action. The truth is that the power of belief plays an essential role in determining the direction of one's life. In such moments, the difference between accepting and defying the verdict lies in what a person choose to believe and declare. Words have immense power. By choosing to believe, a person aligns with faith, hope, and the possibilities that God provides. This choice is not about rejecting reality but about embracing a higher truth.

Medical science may declare an end, but God's power is limitless; transcending human understanding is a profound act of faith. Gerald Winslow summarizes it this way, "the moral power of reasoning should not be overlooked ... that the faith that people have in a physician is as much a healing element as in any medical treatment."[25] But by rejecting the doctor's report and declaring life and healing, one is engaging in a spiritual battle. A person has chosen to align herself with God's promises rather than the limitations of human understanding. The Bible reminds us in Proverbs 18:21 that "death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits."[26] Your words matter. Speak life, speak faith, and speak healing.

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[25] Gerald R. Winslow, "From Loyalty to Advocacy: A New Metaphor for Nursing," *The Hastings Center Report* 14, no. 3 (June 1984): 34, https://www-jstor-org.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/stable/3561187?seq=3.

[26] Michael D. Coogan, "Proverbs 18:21," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 918.

One's decision is a testament to his or her relationship with God. It reflects your trust in His goodness and His plan for you. Even when the world says there is no hope, God says otherwise. He is the source of all life and has the final say. By rejecting fear and embracing faith, you are living out the essence of being a child of God. Let your faith declare a new beginning. Speak life, believe in the possibility of healing, and trust that God is with you every step of the way. Look in the mirror; if you see doubt or fear, take it to God. Let Him reshape your perspective, renew your spirit, and guide you toward a future filled with hope and possibility. After all, in God's hands, miracles are possible, and His grace can rewrite every report.

Conclusion

Linda Carozza underscores the importance of communication and its relationship with aging. She states, "understanding the underlying mechanisms that contribute to healthy aging is important for all members of society, as well as the elderly and aged individuals who may suffer from disabilities."[27] This project, aimed at creating an environment for contact and positive change in a social adult program setting, will address self-expression, language, and communication. It will help older people demonstrate and articulate their lifelong learning knowledge and discard misconceptions about aging. Importantly, I will use the weekly session to provide information that guides the elderly into a meaningful relationship with God.

Connecting with God is both a personal journey and a communal responsibility, especially when it involves nurturing the spiritual well-being of seniors. The Prime

[27] Linda S. Carozza, *Communication and Aging: Creative Approaches to Improving the Quality of Life* (San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing Incorporated, 2015), 21.

Seniors Tuesday Program deepens individuals' relationships with God and fosters a sense of community. This well-rounded, interdisciplinary approach, integrating psychology, sociology, and biblical theology, demonstrates how a collective effort can strengthen the faith of each individual. By addressing seniors' unique spiritual and emotional needs, this initiative fosters personal growth and strengthens the collective faith community.

The practices emphasized in the program—prayer, discussion, bible study, and journaling—serve as essential tools in cultivating a deep relationship with God. These disciplines encourage seniors to reflect on their faith, connect with others, and provide a sense of purpose in their spiritual journey. They also provide a means for dealing with the challenges of aging, such as loneliness, health issues, and shifting social roles. By equipping seniors with spiritual coping strategies, the program allows them to engage meaningfully with their faith while fostering a sense of peace and resilience, inspiring them to live each day with purpose and motivation.

Psalm 27 is a foundation for the senior program journey, reminding participants of God's unwavering presence and protection. These texts provide not only emotional comfort but also a roadmap for facing life's trials with confidence and hope. This scripture encourages participants to see their lives through a lens of faith, trust, and gratitude. Faith communities play a crucial role in this process. By offering support, accountability, and opportunities for collective worship, they create an environment where seniors can grow in their faith alongside others. Leadership, inspired by figures like William Booth and informed by theologians like James Cone, emphasizes the need to address spirituality's personal and systemic aspects.

Programs like this challenge seniors to actively engage in their faith, helping them rediscover their self-worth and purpose within the larger body of Christ. Over time, these habits become transformative, leading to a stronger and more intimate relationship with God. By practicing these disciplines, individuals cultivate a faith that is resilient, reflective, and responsive to God's guidance.

In closing, God's plan for each person is deeply personal. No one else can fully understand the journey He has set for the individual. Therefore, prayer, reflection, and faith are crucial to seeking His will. When feeling lost or hopeless, one can turn to God and trust that He sees the bigger picture. His ways are higher than ours, and His understanding is beyond comprehension. By drawing closer to Him, one gains clarity, strength, and peace.

Accepting God's will does not mean passively waiting for a miracle. It means actively participating in healing, believing in His promises, and taking steps to care for the body, mind, and spirit. This mindset invites transformation and allows a person to experience hope even in the darkest moments.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Before embarking on the project, Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach, my journey has been marked by struggles with low self-esteem and fear of public speaking, compounded by the challenge of implementing a faith-based twelve-step program and the anxiety of potential rejection. I was overwhelmed with nerves, had many doubts, and was uncertain if my ideas would resonate with others. The fear of vulnerability and the prospect of my project being judged was significant hurdle.

The term "interdisciplinary approach" in the project title refers to the integration of various fields to create a holistic and comprehensive program for seniors. This approach aims to address not only their spiritual needs but also their psychological (mental) and social well-being, offering a well-rounded and effective support system.

Despite the recurring thought that no one would show up, I clung to hope and faith. I entrusted the success of my project to God and stepped out in faith, believing in its potential. The thought of failure was like a heavy weight on my shoulders, but I refused to let it crush my spirit. Even if no one had responded, the disappointment would have been profound. It would have felt like a blow after all the effort I poured into this project. However, I would have persisted, demonstrating my unwavering

commitment. The potential failure of the project was a test of my resilience and determination, and I would have used it as an opportunity for personal growth, refining my approach and enhancing the project for the future.

A Model of Strength and Hope

My spiritual autobiography has intersected with this project's context and content. Content (information) is shared through various media, such as articles, presentations, personal testimonies, and discussions, while context helps to clarify its meaning and relevance. Understanding both is essential for effective communication and engagement. My journey toward the kingdom of God became my reason for living. The Salvation Army is where I built my relationship with God and found happiness, joy, and peace. As a licensed individual chemical dependency counselor, social worker assistant, and evangelist chaplain, I view my role not just as a set of duties, but as a genuine calling. This ministry extends into every small interaction. Ministering is simply about bringing kindness, respect, and presence to others, making a meaningful and necessary difference every day.

The Salvation Army's influence on this project is profound and foundational, stemming directly from my more than thirty years of personal experience, as well as transformations the organization has experienced. The project's core is to create a faith-based ministry for the Salvation Army Prime Seniors Tuesday Program using an adaptation of the twelve-step model that directly reflects the life-altering benefits. The Salvation Army's existing Prime Seniors Tuesday Program provides the direct target audience and setting for my work. The project aims to benefit this existing program by

creating a faith-based ministry, demonstrating a desire to give back and enrich the very community that has helped so many. The Salvation Army's role in this project is not just as a setting, but as a partner and inspiration, providing the foundation and support for the faith-based ministry.

My personal journey of spiritual growth, family reunification, and societal contribution, nurtured by The Salvation Army, serves as both the inspiration and the empirical justification for using a faith-based, twelve-step approach to promote spiritual awakening and recovery among senior participants. This approach, which is rooted in the principles of faith and the Twelve Steps, provides a structured and supportive framework for participants to navigate their spiritual journey.

As a senior myself, the program helps me internalize the senior perspective on perseverance. This experience translates into genuine empathy for the people I am trying to help. I can speak with a proper understanding. I can authentically share the feeling of needing to “keep going,” which will make my support more powerful and comforting.

By embodying this program’s message, I become a living example for the other seniors in this project. I am showing them that it is possible to face challenges and still move forward on one’s spiritual journey. They will see my strength and be encouraged to continue their journey toward God with comfort and confidence. In short, the Tuesday Program has given me the perseverance I needed to become a reliable, empathetic, and inspiring leader. As such, I can address my fellow seniors’ needs to use this program to clarify the importance of the Salvation Army program and the value of this Doctor of Ministry project.

The project's objective is to address the problem of seniors' lack of knowledge on how to build a relationship with God. The hypothesis is that a seven-week training program project will equip seniors to foster this relationship. The program project aims to build upon and benefit from the existing Prime Senior Tuesday Program at the Salvation Army, which attracts seniors from various community centers and surrounding areas, including Springfield, Ohio, and West Carrollton, Ohio.

By creating a bridge that transfers significance to their own lives into the space that helps the participant transition into their daily lives, the project program ultimately offers training options and opportunities rooted in spiritual principles. The project's foundation in faith-based recovery creates a protected environment for seniors to share struggles and seek prayer. Observation reveals that many seniors lack a relationship with God, have stopped attending church, and often experience isolation, which has fueled the implementation of this project. The program provides a complementary pathway for seniors to experience spiritual awakening and divine intervention, offering a window to share their struggles and seek prayer.

This model is not intended to provide professional or clinical therapy. Instead, it is a complementary pathway for seniors to experience spiritual awakening and divine intervention. The six-week project is designed to cover the basics of the project, its implementation within the seniors' community, biblical aspects (specifically Ps. 27:1-14), historical perspectives on mental illness and women's rights in the 1900s, and the interdisciplinary approach. Each week will focus on a specific program project foundation, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding and a gradual immersion into the faith-based, twelve-step approach. The faith-based, twelve-step

approach is a structured program that guides participants through a series of steps, each aimed at fostering a deeper relationship with God and promoting spiritual growth. It is a proven method that has been successful in many faith-based recovery programs and forms the backbone of this project.

Participants: Contributing Audience

In recruiting individuals to participate in this project, I intended to reach out to those who would benefit from the seven-week sessions. In addition, I sought to raise awareness of the numerous resources and information available to provide insight to seniors who lack a relationship with God. The participants were all African Americans—76.5% female and 23.5% male. The ages ranged from eighteen to seventy-seven years. Context associates, who play a crucial role, were also identified and welcomed to contribute to the project.

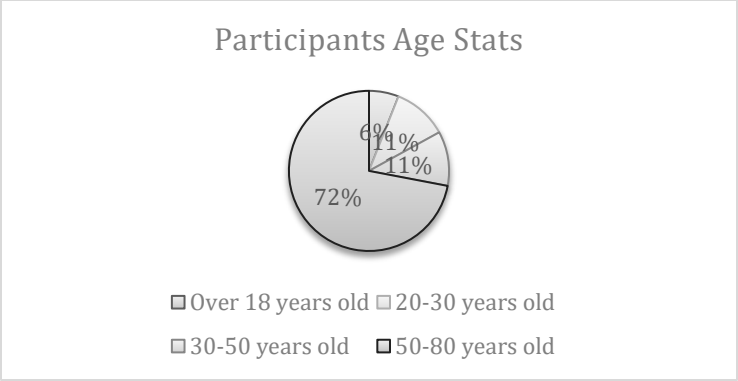

Figure 1. Age group of participants

Surprisingly, everyone contributed to the weekly sessions. Some testified while others supported the project and its success. There was even a suggestion that a monthly

meeting or luncheon be held to bring everyone together and move the project forward, highlighting the importance of their continued participation.

The Contribution of Professional Associates

I am deeply grateful for the support and contributions of my professional associates. Their expertise and dedication have been invaluable to the success of this project. I look forward to our continued collaboration and the positive impact we can make together.

I have reached out to Dr. Teresa Johnson, a mentor and dear friend, since 1994. I credit her with being instrumental in my decision to pursue the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary. She recognized the potential in me that I had not yet recognized. Watching her journey from a gym teacher to a school principal, and then pursuing her doctoral program, was a powerful inspiration. Dr. Jones consistently encouraged me to "reach for the stars," even during her own difficult times, cherishing the meaningful moments we shared, like exercising and going to dinner. Our commitment deepened through her participation in the focus group for my Doctor of Ministry program, where her consultation, document reviews, and advice were an immeasurable source of guidance.

Rev. Dr. Eshakhia Sobukwe's support is terrific. I was also very fortunate to have her, a distinguished UTS graduate, serve as my second professional associate. My connection with her deepened significantly during a 2023 focus group, where I discovered we were both from Detroit, Michigan. We instantly hit it off and became fast friends. This relationship extended beyond the project; her family welcomed me into their

world without ever meeting me. I received empowering words of encouragement from her mother over the phone, and her adult children were incredibly instrumental in helping me understand various computer functions. This profound, extended support system was invaluable, but her personal involvement in the project was a pivotal lifeline.

For a short time, I was genuinely ready to give up on the project. Rev. Dr. Eshakhia Sobukwe reached out with the encouragement I needed to persevere. Her success stood as a powerful, living example, instantly instilling renewed confidence when I needed it most. Her guidance was comprehensive, providing the vital moral support that kept me motivated and the practical expertise I required to forge ahead and ultimately complete the project successfully.

Finally, I would like to thank Rev. Dr. Carolyn Banks, whom I was fortunate to know as a colleague and a wonderful pastor, mentor, and friend. I initially met her twenty-four years ago as a fellow Salvation Army soldier shortly after I moved to Dayton, Ohio, in 1993. Once she discovered I was a Salvation Army officer, our relationship immediately deepened and took on a new, collaborative level of mutual understanding and respect. Because of this shared history and faith, I felt comfortable contacting her. I trusted her implicitly to discuss my project's approach and gain invaluable insights on managing and communicating effectively with all my professional associates.

I initially reached out to more than sixty individuals to participate in this project and was struck by the dedication of the seven interested people who stayed for the entire seven sessions. They all provided a wealth of information crucial to the project's success. I appreciated their willingness to offer insights and provide key points, leveraging their

professional networks and mentorship experience. I am incredibly fortunate to have had these professional relationships to enhance my project and personal growth.

Methodology

The project consisted of the following components: pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, speakers, discussions, and personal testimonies.

The methodology used in this doctoral project, titled "Building a Relationship with God and Seniors Through an Interdisciplinary Approach," employed a qualitative and quantitative design. The qualitative research methods included questionnaires speakers, and discussions are found in the appendix.

Pre- and Post-Questionnaires

The pre- and post-questionnaire is the most effective method for collecting data, which is then presented in graphs and charts to display the collected statistics. The pre-questionnaire set up the project, while the post- questionnaire concluded the project. The questionnaire aims to evaluate their beliefs before and after the program by offering thought-provoking questions that create a more accurate picture of how people view the faith-based ministry, spiritual healing, and prayer, thereby collecting specific data.

In preparing the questions, it was essential to determine the participants' current understanding of these subjects. Who would benefit from the weekly sessions? And what would they gain from this program? I wanted to reach a diverse group, regardless of gender and age. However, I aimed to gather unbiased accounts of people's experiences and gauge their feelings or mood to achieve better results.

For example, two questions concentrate on the importance of prayer toward the end of the questionnaire. 1) Could you explain why prayer is needed or not in helping people with life and spiritual struggles?, and 2) Would you like to pray for those who are misled and struggling with seeking God? These questions focus on the transformational power of prayer. Prayer is essential, as it serves to unite with God, enabling individuals to align their hearts with His guidance and peace, which is the project's objective. It fosters a deeper relationship with God, promotes personal growth, and provides comfort during life's challenges. Prayer was prominent in Jesus Christ's life. This is reinforced in James 1:5 and Mark 1:35. James 1:5 says, "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you" (NRSVA).[1] We are encouraged to ask for wisdom, as seen in Mark 1:35, where Jesus sets the example of praying alone early in the morning. Mark 1:35 tells us, "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed" (NRSVA).[2] Prayer should be the center of our lives. Prayer changes lives. If we are steadfast in prayer, their lives can be changed, too.

Selected Speakers

Secondly, the speakers played a particularly significant role in the success of this project. Each speaker's presentation spoke of the importance of one or more of the foundations associated with this project. The participants could take notes, ask questions,

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[1] Michael D. Coogan, "James 1:5," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2119.

[2] Michael D. Coogan, "Mark 1:35," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1794.

and request additional information about their presentation, personal experience, and testimonies that gave insight into senior issues. The participants were encouraged to ask questions.

Picking the speakers was challenging. Connecting with the audience and making them feel comfortable enough to ask questions is vital. Because it is such a sensitive subject, I wanted them to express their emotions. Most importantly, the subject was prioritized to give those attending a basic understanding, rather than expanding on every detail**.** For everyone to benefit from the speaker and their presentation, I wanted them to 1) convey key ideas in a way that the participants can understand, 2) communicate the ability to share ideas across disciplines and professionalism, and 3) deliver accurate, clear, and interesting information to those engaged in the topic. It will be useless if the information is inaccurate, incomplete, or unclear.

In other words, prioritizing information can enhance their learning. To present a clear and engaging speech, descriptions were used. With description, words were used to create a picture in the participant's mind. Physical realities, social realities, emotional experiences, consequences, or contexts were described. Words were used that the audience would understand and terms they may not have known were defined. It was not assumed that something obvious to one person would also be evident to others.

To my surprise, the selected speakers delved deep into the project, addressing the true purpose of the project, adding testimony and relevant information, and acknowledging the importance of faith-based ministry and connecting with God through prayer. Everyone benefits because every person faces challenges that affect their mind, body, or spirit. At any given time, we are either going through something, coming out of

something, or about to face something new. Prayer for healing allows us to be continuously restored and made whole, no matter what season of life we are in. It reminds us that God cares about every detail of our lives and offers peace, strength, and renewal for anyone who seeks Him.

Learning through Discussions

Part of my strategy was to have an engaging, meaningful learning experience for everyone, including the speakers. Most discussions require preparation, but in this case, I wanted each discussion to be open and unrestricted. As part of the arrangement, each party needed to be receptive to the other and speak freely without reservation or hesitation. Being comfortable was one of the priorities. Each week, the discussion took different forms; some dialogues were structured, while others were more informal about conversations. It offered many benefits to learning. I noticed that everyone learned more when they actively participated in learning, rather than passively listening.

I wanted the participants to respond and contribute to the discussion in four ways: compliment, comment, connect and question the presenters. In most cases, the discussions went past the required time, so I just left the conversation open until they finished it themselves, making it more substantial. Based on this perception, how people perceive these sessions may determine whether they are widely accepted.

Personal Testimony

Those participating reflected on their own faith journeys and openly shared their accounts with others. The speakers also shared their own testimonies, recognizing God's

hand in their lives. They spoke clearly, articulating the experience and sharing their witness. Their stories were dynamic in the ongoing narrative of God's redemptive work.

Throughout each session, every narrative, permeated with joy and heartache, ended in a sigh of relief that God touched their lives. Each story became more than personal experiences; it became a testimony of worship for God and hope to those attending. I felt compelled to share my testimony. We should never doubt the power of God to work in our lives. No matter what one is going through, they can trust God has the answer. Whatever it may be, it is important to keep praying, asking, and exercising faith.

The methodology of this project was imperative to its success. The questionnaires were important to the participants' way of thinking at the beginning and end of the sessions. What was their train of thought at that time? What would be the impact of my project in their lives? Would they be willing to share their testimony? In the seven weeks of meeting with everyone who attended, I could see the changes that manifested in each attendee. There was one week that our session ended in tears. There was not much that any of us could say. The testimony was so inspiring that her words created a bond that gave birth to fellowship, communion, and unity.

Implementation

This doctoral project began out of my own journey and personal challenges. Now that I am a senior and older, my thoughts return to my family, who could have benefited from this project. The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program at the Salvation Army (SA) in Dayton, Ohio, focuses on seniors' lack of knowledge about how to deepen their relationship with God. This project was developed out of concern to equip senior citizens

with spiritual principles, including self-care, empathy, and, stressing their worth in the usage of presentations and discussions during seven-week sessions. Each two-hour session discussed their situation, gathered information on agencies, and provided information to assist them throughout their journey.

The sixth chapter outlines and breaks down the doctoral project titled, Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach. The doctoral project's duration was seven weeks, consisting of weekly sessions, presentations, guest speakers, and informative discussions. The meetings were held via Zoom on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:30 pm, beginning July 1, 2025, and continuing through August 12, 2025. In our first session, Week One: Session One, the host sent out invitations via Zoom to twelve potential participants. Only eight respondents engaged in the project. Each session began with prayer and a welcome, followed by introductions. Sometimes, I prayed. Sometimes, I asked one of the participants to lead us in worship. I began each session by examining the four foundations of this project—biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary—to educate participants on the ministry's focus. The first week covered the foundations of the doctoral project. The following meetings presented a deep dive into the four foundations. The seventh and final session summarized the doctoral project, providing an overview of the impact of the Tuesday Senior Program and how prayer and God's presence are in their lives.

Week One: Session One

The initial session commenced with eight participants present, out of the twelve invited to the Zoom presentation. The session aimed to gather insights and

access the progress on this crucial initiative. Dr. Banks led an open prayer, seeking divine guidance and wisdom for the team, and expressing gratitude for their willingness to contribute. Sam, the facilitator and host opened the meeting by introducing the candidate, who aims to address the spiritual needs of isolated seniors. The importance of participant involvement is that their contributions will make a positive impact on seniors and the wider community. The project host then outlined the ground rules for the project, stressing that everyone had received the email with attachments, including the consent form, flyer, project covenant, and pre- and post-questionnaires. She explained that these questionnaires were crucial for evaluating the session's success. She encouraged participants to complete and return them, offering to mail hard copies if needed.

Following the introduction, Mr. David Greer asked a question about the seniors, the primary source of the project, which resonated with the team's deep empathy. He asked, “How did you come about choosing the seniors as the entity of this project? My response: As a senior citizen and a long-time Salvation Army member since 1991, I shared my personal involvement in the Tuesday Prime Senior Program and my interactions with other isolated seniors. The focus on senior citizens, driven by my personal convictions and experience, echoed the team's shared mission and understanding.

Mr. Mayfield's elaboration on Mr. Greer's point highlighted the team's commitment to ethical considerations in their approach, which sounded like outreach, involving personal engagement and word-of-mouth communication within the community. I admit there was a revelation—a stumbling block in the project's

development—due to ethical concerns raised by the captain overseeing the Prime Senior Tuesday Program at the Salvation Army. This revelation demonstrated the team's respect for such issues, which led me to broaden the outreach, connecting with seniors in churches, the wider community, and wherever there was a need, even suggesting faith-based studies at individuals' homes.

Mr. Mayfield then questioned the premise that seniors have a lack of knowledge of God, asking why I believed it was true. I clarified that most seniors believe in God, but my interactions revealed that some admitted they did not know God, had no relationship with Him, or had stopped attending church. The emphasis was not on all seniors, but rather on those encountered who expressed this lack of connection. Mr. Mayfield then pondered if these individuals might be agnostic, drawing parallels to his own past agnosticism and his eventual strengthening of faith through personal experiences. He suggested that many might be in the middle regarding their spirituality, especially given the current societal climate.

Next, Dr. Johnson raised a crucial point about how health and senior rights fit into the project, given the ongoing discussions around changes to Medicaid and Medicare. She elaborated on the "Big Beautiful Bill" (presumably a recent piece of legislation) that would require seniors aged fifty-five to sixty-four to work or volunteer at least eighty hours per month to maintain their Medicare/Medicaid benefits. She also highlighted the harshness of this bill, particularly for seniors with health concerns, disabilities, or caregiving responsibilities for children or grandchildren. If passed, it could lead to widespread chaos, with seniors losing access to nursing homes, medical care, and even food assistance if programs like SNAP are eliminated. In this case, seniors would have

difficulty expressing God's love and mercy due to the existential crises they face. She also acknowledged the importance of prayer, stressing the need for more boots on the ground and practical contributions, such as visitations and communication, to demonstrate God's love through action. If seniors experience tangible help, they will be more receptive to spiritual messages, and that communication is key to reinforcing the belief that God loves me and loves to send me help.

The discussion then circled back to the impact of the aforementioned bill on senior citizens. The host expressed deep concern about how it would affect their income, medical care, and overall well-being. She lamented the decline in traditional church outreach to seniors and highlighted how the candidate's project offers a "new way for bringing back an old way of taking care of the senior citizens and letting them know we're not alone," even through simple phone calls.

Dr. Banks echoed these concerns, acknowledging the importance of addressing the needs of sick and struggling seniors. She agreed that the project's focus on building a relationship with God is vital but also stressed the different levels of spirituality among seniors and the challenge of reaching those whose basic needs are unmet. She reiterated that it is difficult to talk about God to someone who is hungry or without a roof over their head, underscoring the importance of continued prayer and research to navigate the potential chaos in government programs for seniors, and offered her full support for this project.

Finally, the discussion touched upon the interdisciplinary approach and how it integrates with a godly approach, given that many disciplines (social work, counseling, case management) are often secular and evidence based. I emphasized the importance of

meeting people where they are, recognizing that not everyone believes in God, but can be influenced by being kind, engaging in conversation, and sharing a faith-based experience. The diverse experiences of the participants, such as Pastor Bank's community interactions, Pastor Emma Blacknell's work with people with an addiction, and Mr. Mayfield's involvement in social justice, are examples of how different secular entities can contribute to a holistic approach, always remembering that even within these fields, there are believers. Dr. Johnson concluded by reiterating that communication is the key to planting seeds of faith, regardless of external circumstances, and that this will further the project's goals.

Session One concluded with a closing prayer and a short review of the biblical foundation. I was grateful to everyone who attended, especially given my past anxiety about presentations. Their support meant a great deal to me. As we move forward, let us remember our shared commitment to this project's goals, which should inspire and motivate us all and leave the audience feeling the same.

Week Two: Session Two

I opened with the Biblical Foundation and its relevance to this project, how Psalm 27:1-14 implements a faith-based recovery program for seniors to share their struggles and seek prayer. My interpretation of the biblical foundation is that it is about finding strength and confidence in God's protection and guidance, trusting Him instead of ourselves, despite our fears and obstacles. What is your interpretation of Psalm 27:1-14?

I read the entire passage of Psalm 27:1-14: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be

afraid? When evil doers assail me to devour my flesh—my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall. I believe that I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord (NRSVA)!"[3] Just as David sought God's guidance in his time of need, these individuals can also find direction and support in their journey. God restored his confidence, and he found joy in the promise of God's deliverance in Psalm 27:13-14. This faith in God's guidance offers reassurance and comfort in their healing process.

Discussion and Feedback

Question: When David was seeking God, had anything particular happened in his life for him to move towards the Lord with such intensity?

Answer: There were two particular things going on with David. He was running from his son, Absalom, and he didn't want to hurt him, so he thought it was best that he flee. Another thing that was going on in his life before was that he was running from Saul, the king, who got jealous of him because he killed 10,000 more men than Saul did. David did not want to kill Saul because he was anointed by God. These two things in his life prompted him to write Psalm 27:1-14.

I can relate to this story because I remember running for more than twenty-seven years. Little did I know I was running from myself. I was looking for God in all the wrong places, wandering, without any guidance or trust in anyone, not even myself. I did not want anyone to know what happened in my life; I kept secrets. That is one of the

[3] Michael D. Coogan, "Psalm 27:1-14," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 794-795.

reasons I picked Psalm 27, because today, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?"[4] That is why I love this psalm.

I want to implement a faith-based recovery program for seniors to share their struggles and seek prayer. In addition, I want to outline the program goals and activities this project aims to provide. Every weekly session will offer information and opportunities to give people time to absorb what they need to grow, minimize what they are carrying, seek help, and connect with God. Moreover, our guest speaker, Dr. Carolyn Banks, will address her personal journey titled "My Personal Journey: From Struggle to God's Purpose." I asked one of the participants to open in prayer.

Program Goals and Activities

A seven-week training program was meant to equip seniors to foster this relationship. Some activities aimed at nurturing connections, growth to promote mutual collaboration, are 1) through prayer circles, scriptures, and devotion study groups, 2) checking on seniors more frequently by creating local groups with neighbors and visiting or calling senior residents, 3) encouraging family engagement and family get-togethers, and 4) inviting individuals who have walked the twelve-step path to share their journey and advice. Meeting these goals intended to highlight an understanding of the diverse spiritual journeys of the seniors I aimed to reach. This concern for seniors' well-being should underscore the project's importance and urgency.

[4] Michael D. Coogan, et al, "Psalm 27:2," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 794.

Guest Speaker: "My Personal Journey: From Struggle to God's Purpose"

> At the Salvation Army, I began the 12 steps, started going to church, and entered the sanctuary. I did not know God before this. The Salvation Army became the turning point of my entire life. It helped restore my relationship with God.[5]

This week, I wanted to create an experience, good and bad, that would give everyone resilience, understanding, and compassion, showing that they are not alone. If I could summarize our journey, I would say there is nothing about our struggle I would change because it made us who we are today. It begins with our guest speaker, who shared her testimony of struggle and triumph, which changed her life.

Dr. Carolyn Banks spoke of her childhood and her downward spiral as she sought her father's love. She was making the wrong choices, which led to unfortunate situations. Twenty-six years ago, she cleaned up her life with God's help and eventually became a Salvation Army cadet in New York. She has two master's degrees from United Theological Seminary in Pastoral Theology and Christian Theology, and a Doctorate from the same institution.

She says, "The point is, God began to restore my relationship with Him. As the saying goes, Ears have not heard nor eyes seen what God had in store. After graduating and becoming a pulpit supply pastor, I began my journey to become a full-time pastor at State Road United Methodist Church in Germantown, Ohio, and Dickson United Methodist Church in Dayton, Ohio. I serve both churches with all my heart."[6]

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[5] Carolyn Banks, "My Personal Journey: From Struggle to God's Purpose," guest lecture, Building A Relationship with God and Seniors Through an Interdisciplinary Approach, Zoom Meeting – Week Two: Session Two, Columbus, OH, July 8, 2025.

[6] Carolyn Banks, "My Personal Journey: From Struggle to God's Purpose," guest lecture, Building A Relationship with God and Seniors Through an Interdisciplinary Approach, Zoom Meeting – Week Two: Session Two, Columbus, OH, July 8, 2025.

Discussion and Feedback

Question: The session ended with questions and answers. One participant asked: I would like to present a scenario to you. If I am a former addict, just off the streets, tired, scared, afraid, with no hope, and God has arrested me, how would you approach me? What would your church offer to keep me coming back?

Answer: A person coming off the streets, who has not eaten in days, is hungry and does not want to hear about God. What I would do, and what I encourage other churches to do, is first to address physical needs, then mental needs, before presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The second week was powerful. The session turned out just as I had planned. The guest speaker's presentation and testimony opened the way to the power of prayer, God's presence, and spiritual transformation. She was not boasting of her accomplishments, but of God. It is a miracle how far she has come serving God with humility and gratitude. This program aims to provide a space for seniors to share their struggles, seek prayer, foster a sense of community and spiritual healing. We closed in prayer and thanked everyone for coming.

Week Three: Session Three

This week, I focused on the Historical Foundation of this doctoral project, opening with the history of the Salvation Army and General William Booth, and his diligence in establishing a foundation to help those in need, including thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and drunks. The Salvation Army was a universal movement based on a message from the Bible. General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was

driven by conviction and empathy. His mission was to preach the Gospel of Christ and meet the community's needs without judgment.

His story is remarkable. In his attempt to serve the poor, preach the Gospel, and bring lasting change to communities, he established a foundation that has created many other movements within the name of Christianity. He was not your traditional preacher, only offering sermons. He fed, clothed, and gave shelter, and faced criticism for it. An article from the Salvation Army asserts his devotion by saying, "To him, meeting human needs was not a distraction from the gospel. It was the gospel in action."[7]

Outlining the history of the Prime Seniors Tuesday Program was next, starting with its long-term effects on addiction. Drug and alcohol addiction has taken its course. Addiction has evolved and so has scientific knowledge that casts light on living, emotional, and social factors that contribute to addictive behaviors, such as stress, trauma, and social isolation.

The Prime Seniors Tuesday Program understands the great emphasis on addressing the causes of addiction, as well as on addiction prevention and treatment. It also recognizes the significant role that social factors play in both the development and treatment of addiction. My project proposal will speak to addressing the subject of women facing mental illness, exacerbated by the stigmatization and hospitalization of these individuals, and the use of substance abuse to deaden the pain.

Dr. Teresa Johnson, the founder and CEO of Empowerment for Growth and Reconstruction, Inc. (EGAR), began her presentation. She earned a doctorate in Public

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[5] The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army's Response to False Claims on the Topic of Racism," The Salvation Army USA, https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/usn/news/the-salvation-armys-response-to-false-claims-on-the-topic-of-racism/.

Policy and Social Change from Union Institute and University and has more than thirty-two years of educational experience in urban schools. Her presentation is titled "Elder Abuse (Part One)." She says, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, elder abuse is "an intentional act or failure to act that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult" (age sixty or older).[8] For example, physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation, mental and physical mistreatment, and neglect are considered elder abuse. The people responsible include children, family members, spouses, and staff at nursing homes, assisted living, and other facilities.

For example, physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation, mental and physical mistreatment, and neglect are considered elder abuse. The people responsible include children, family members, spouses, and staff at nursing homes, assisted living, and other facilities. Unfortunately, most of it goes unreported. She argues that while pre-pandemic sources estimated approximately one in ten Americans age sixty or older had experienced some form of elder abuse,[9] a more recent study found that one in five older adults reported elder abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic.[10] Jennifer E. Storey, the author of "Risk Factors for Elder Abuse and

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[8] CDC, "About the Abuse of Older Persons," U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/elder-abuse/about/index.html.

[9] Andre B. Rosay and Carrie F. Mulford, "Prevalence Estimates and Correlates of Elder Abuse in the United States: The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey," *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect* 29, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 2017): 1-14, https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/prevalence-estimates-and-correlates-elder-abuse-united-states-national-0.

[10] E-Shein Chang and Becca R. Levy, "High Prevalence of Elder Abuse During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Risk and Resilience Factors," *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 29, no. 11 (January 2021): 1152-1159, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33518464/.

Neglect: A Review of the Literature," stated that one in twenty-four cases of abuse are reported to authorities.[11]

In conclusion, she underlined the importance of remembering that elderly abuse can happen to anyone. We must enlighten older adults, authorities, caregivers, and the community on abuse. It is crucial to their well-being. She also gave a few examples of how to stay safe: staying active in the community, staying connected with family and friends, becoming an advocate for your own health care, and reporting any incident of abuse.

She also asked us to be aware of other physical signs, such as weight loss, poor hygiene, and unexplained bruises or cuts. Everyone left session three, waiting to hear about her next presentation: "Elder Abuse—Part Two." The question-and-answer discussion lasted more than forty-five minutes. We closed with a prayer and our agenda for the next session.

Week Four: Session Four

"Religion is central, That music is sacred. And the rivers and trees are healing."[12] Week Four will focus on the theological concept, such as Soteriology—the study of salvation—and other critical soteriological beliefs. Although the study focuses on many

[11] Jennifer E. Storey, "Risk Factors for Elder Abuse and Neglect: A Review of the Literature," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 50 (January-February 2020): 101339, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1359178918303471?via%3Dihub.

[12] Michelle Mary Lelwica, *Starving for Salvation: The Spiritual Dimensions of Eating Problems among American Girls and Women* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1999), 9. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=272733&c=UERG&ppg=9.

religions, it embraces various views and traditions related to being saved from sin, suffering, or rebirth, depending on the religious setting.

Soteriology is different from other world religions. Understanding Soteriology helps us see why salvation is by grace, faith, and Christ alone, as written in Ephesians 2:8-9, which says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."[13] Soteriology helps us know that our salvation "will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus peace that passes all understanding," in Philippians 4:7.[14] We may attempt to save ourselves, but in the end, we will fail.

Fred Sanders, the author of *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology*, suggests, "What is needed above all is an holistic approach that can assess all of the economic evidence in one massive movement of theological understanding."[15] I would argue that one massive movement would be overwhelming. I prefer an approach where the evidence is presented casually, slowly building a connection that does not push the individual away. It equips them with the tools to know Him more deeply and take responsibility for their spiritual journey, reinforcing their self-esteem and respect and, in addition, the significance of Black Theology. Black Theology may struggle to provide meaningful insights into the nature of salvation in this context, and it might be more

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[13] Michael D. Coogan, "Ephesians 2:8-9," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2055.

[14] Michael D. Coogan, "Philippians 4:7," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2065.

[15] Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 57, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.seminarybookshelf.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/reader.action?docID=6726037&c=RVBVQg&ppg=58.

prudent for theology to focus on its domain rather than engaging with broader societal complexities.

This project aims to develop a strategy for creating a healthy recovery program for women, African American women, who have mental illness and substance abuse, by utilizing a twelve-step faith-based recovery ministry model. Black women with mental illness do not get much attention. Much of our pain, sacrifice, and struggles go unnoticed. We become silent individuals who do not discuss our challenges until problems arise. It is a silent illness that we face every day. Julie Jordan-Zachery writes, "The campaign is a battle to make visible what has too often have been kept invisible in the Black community – mental illness. It is an attempt to challenge the silence that cloaks mental illness."[16]

Our guest speakers for Week Four: Session Four were Rev. Emma and Douglas Blacknell with a presentation titled, "Generational Trauma and Healing." They have a background in studying homelessness and mental health among Black women and children and note a significant lack of awareness of the historical context of slavery from a theological perspective. Black women have suffered from generations of being a punching bag, subjected to cruelty and violence. In addition, this trauma has contributed to chronic health issues, substance abuse, and other problems that have led to the early death of loved ones. In the final minutes, they offered a solution, a path to healing.

During the question-and-answer discussion, one of the participants shared her own story of being a slave to domestic violence, drugs, and misinformation. Her turning point was a decision to surrender her life to God and begin a process of self-work. Another highlighted the importance of breaking generational patterns by making

[16] Jordan-Zachery, "Why So Many Sisters Are Mad and Sad,", 127.

conscious choices, which included changing her diet, cleaning up her language, and addressing her personal history of trauma. Lastly, the last participant emphasized the need to forgive others and herself for past mistakes, which allowed for a new beginning. She also shared a story about forgiving the man who molested her as a child.

The session ended with a conversation discussing the impact on Black women, addiction, and healing. Rev. Emma Blacknell admitted everyone can benefit, because every person faces challenges that affect their mind, body, or spirit. At any given time, a person is either going through something, coming out of something, or about to face something new. Prayer for healing allows people to be continuously restored and made whole, no matter what season of life they are in. It reminds people that God cares about every detail of each life and offers peace, strength, and renewal for anyone who seeks Him.

Week Five: Session Five

This session was opened with a prayer, followed by a question from one of the participants regarding the Historical Foundation. The question was about the evolution of mental health treatment.

Question: Has the mental health treatment been significantly influenced by the interdisciplinary field of science, chemistry, medicine, and psychology?

Answer: The history of mental health and the evolution of treatment are not always a flattering story, but they explain a great deal about how and why the landscape of mental health treatment is what it is today. In the fields of science, chemistry, medicine,

and psychology, we observe mental treatment in different contexts, which provide crucial insights for its future direction.

My project proposal will address the mental illness of women with faith worsened by stigmatization, hospitalization, and their use of substances to relieve pain and withdraw from the situation. Using the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations, this doctrine will develop a strategy to aid in the recovery of African American women who have mental illness and substance abuse by utilizing a twelve-step, faith-based recovery program.

The week before this session, guest speakers spoke about their relationships with God and seniors. Before the current session began, the speaker told us about himself. He is from Chicago, Illinois, and has resided in Dayton, Ohio, since the mid-nineties. Dayton, Ohio, is his home base now. He described himself as a career student, now attending Walden University, seeking a PhD in criminal justice. He also worked in alcohol treatment centers in the Dayton region, with clients like alcoholics and addicts, transitional housing, and even veterans. It is a very prevalent disease or condition in the society we live in.

This week's guest speaker was Mr. Billy Madison. He concentrated on Psalm 100:5: "For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."[17] He felt that, in addition to Psalm 27:1-14, this would be instructive for her project as well. It speaks not only to the present project target but also to future generations who may need God's love, guidance, and hope.

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[17] Michael D. Coogan, "Psalm 100:5," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard with the Apocrypha* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 855.

He started by expressing the importance of salvation. He described salvation as a blessing that puts us all on the track of spiritual growth. Suggesting that, even those not saved, and even for those who are, spiritual growth is the objective. We are not perfect. We are a work in progress. Most importantly, he stressed that we are all on the same level, whether we are saved or unsaved, because we can learn from each other. Moreover, we are in this together.

He recommends that we can transmit or model behavior in word or deed, a concept deeply rooted in our spiritual journey. By living our lives in accordance with our faith, we can serve as a beacon of light for those who may not be far along. Furthermore, God loves us all the same. He does not love one person more than the next. Likewise, that is why we need to help each other and not judge each other. We are all God's children.

As the presentation drew to a close, the speaker, in a display of profound humility, shared his testimony: "I am transmitting everything that I have learned. It is not for me; it is for everybody else. God knows where he wanted to take me. What he adds to me is for somebody else. It is for those who are coming along who share this with me. There is no particular place or goal I have because I have already reached them. It is about the internal rewards I am looking for that make me happy when I help somebody else with what God so freely gave to me. Going out there and discipling others is that type of shaping and molding now."[18]

There was a short pause, and he continued, "This chapter in my life is not earthly. It is about spiritual growth now because ultimately, I will not be here physically. I may be here spiritually in the hearts and minds of some people who are still around. I want to

[18] "Psalm 100:5," presented by Billy Mayfield, guest lecture, Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach, Zoom Meeting, Week Five: Session Five, Columbus, Ohio, July 29, 2025.

leave a positive legacy as someone who tried to help folks and takes spiritual growth seriously. Living in this world will bring the devil out of you."[19]

Question: Has any agency reached out to you for your guidance in social justice?

Answer: Yes, asking me if I am interested, but for now, my work is within the community. I am on a different course now. The approach I am taking right now is mixed messages when I interface with society. I consider myself a human being in a spiritual experience. It is a learning process. I meet people where they are.

Question: Can you tell us about your position in the church? Can you invite us as well?

Answer: I am a member of Mount Calvary Baptist Church, an old movie theatre. I am in the music ministry. You are all welcome to come to our church.

Question: Are you more spiritual than religious?

Answer: I am a spiritual person, but I attend church and work on spiritual growth religiously.

Even though the speaker has degrees that teach us religion to some extent, he is on a spiritual journey, more spiritual than religious. He claims that spiritual growth is home, and as long as you can help people and meet them where they are, it is because of his spiritual being.

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[19] "Psalm 100:5," presented by Billy Mayfield, guest lecture, Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach, Zoom Meeting, Week Five: Session Five, Columbus, Ohio, July 29, 2025.

Week Six: Session Six

The week began with a light conversation and greetings, then gradually moved into the session for the evening. Although these sessions were nearing their end, I could not thank everyone enough for their support and participation. Two participants had left the program. I was able to identify ten more individuals interested in the project. They were caregivers, volunteers, nurses' aides, and students who work in senior homes and hospitals. They heard about the program in Week Three and had been attending every week since. The age group ranged from eighteen to thirty years, including eight women and two men. In the third week, Pastor Banks, Pastor(s) Emma and Douglas Blacknell, and Mr. Mayfield did not attend due to other commitments. I was, however, glad they completed the project document.

Pastor Darice Jackson opened the session with a prayer. I followed with the introduction to the Interdisciplinary Foundation. This evening's presentation and discussion focused on the theory of multiple branches of knowledge. Enhancing a relationship with God begins with prayer. It is a process that takes practice, that may not be perfect, and one size does not fit all. I plan to present an interdisciplinary approach that will focus on these fundamentals: building a relationship with God, personal growth, well-being, and spiritual development.

I wanted to go back to the beginning, with General William Booth and his vision to move the Church beyond the traditional four walls and into society. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this foundation gives us a unique position that provides insight into the transition from discipleship to leadership. He created leaders—men and women—who not only preached but also led people into discipleship and into

understanding their roles as part of the body of Christ. General Booth set the example, in the classroom, in the fields, in the home, in the street, around the kitchen table. He walked alongside them, just as Jesus taught the disciples. Jesus modeled this for us through his interactions with his disciples: they ate together, and they walked together. He uses every moment to develop the men and women around Him as future leaders of the early Church.

Major Anthony Juliana, the president and principal of the Evangeline Booth College (EBC) in Atlanta, Georgia, says, "It's a model that says if we have the conviction that leadership development happens in the corps, if everybody has that as a conviction, then it becomes part of who we are. It becomes part of our corps culture. It's all about discipleship. It's all about leading people."[20]

Toward the end of the presentation, I recommended some books for the participants to read. They are not expensive or found in the local library. The suggested titles included: 1) *The Making of a Leader* by Dr. J. Robert Clinton, 2) *Confident Leader!* by Dan Reiland, 3) *Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge* by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, 4) *The Ascent of a Leader* by Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, and 5) *Designed to Lead* by Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck.

Even though you may think of yourselves as a follower, that is where leaders come from. I would like to see where following will take you in terms of leadership. Begin where you are.

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[20] "The Discipleship Model of Leadership Development," presented by Kristin Mudge, The Salvation Army National Headquarters, May 20, 2024, https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/stories/the-discipleship-model-of-leadership-development/.

Our Guest Speaker

Brenda Middleton believes that God pushes you where He wants you to be. She says, "He takes you in and out of your trials and tribulations, and sometimes we get in the way." [21] This program demonstrates how we challenge God's ability versus our own. She acknowledged that our choices often lead us to make decisions that complicate our lives, and she expressed appreciation for the Prime Tuesday Program, which provides healing and inner transformation. Then her presentation shifted to her personal testimony. She spoke of her childhood, her family dynamics, and how she hated herself. She was overweight, dark, and insecure, and surrounded by hidden family secrets. Her testimony substantiated the true meaning of this project. As an African American woman, she communicated how the twelve-step, faith-based recovery program worked through her experiences.

Question: It was an encouraging story, a story of hope. In your work when you see the child who has the color concern or the weight concern or the self-esteem concern that you were working through as you were growing into adulthood, are you able to share with the parent some advice as how they can help their child? Have you ventured into that role yet?

Answer: Briefly, I did family counseling, but in foster placement and transitional housing, we do not come in contact with the parents. It is more of a case worker. I had a pleasing tone with the child. I actively listen. I do not preach.[22]

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[21] Brenda Middleton, "Personal Growth and Well Being and Spiritual Development," presented by Brenda Middleton, *Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach*, Zoom Meeting – Week Six: Session Six, Columbus, OH, August 5, 2025.

[22] Brenda Middleton, "Personal Growth and Well Being and Spiritual Development," presented by Brenda Middleton, *Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach*, Zoom Meeting – Week Six: Session Six, Columbus, OH, August 5, 2025.

In closing, she recommended that we, as pastors, caregivers, counselors, and social workers, embrace the stories that we hold in our hearts and share them without any hesitation. Our stories can help our seniors in the program.

Week Seven: Session Seven

As usual, we opened in prayer and did a little housekeeping, followed by any questions from the previous week. This week, there were two presentations: a continuation of "Elder Abuse-Part Two" by Dr. Teresa Johnson, followed by Pastor Darice Jackson, with "Childhood Trauma and Family Dynamics."

In the Appendix, you can view her PowerPoint based on recent reports and outreach efforts in Franklin and Montgomery Counties, Ohio, covering the most prevalent to the least pervasive forms of financial exploitation. We can make a significant difference by educating and training health care workers, social workers, and law enforcement, and by investing in identifying and responding to elderly concerns. This program is a start.

Elder Abuse Concerns in Franklin and Montgomery Counties, Ohio

Franklin County, Ohio (in order of most common to least common)

Financial Exploitation: This is the most common form of elder abuse in Franklin County, Ohio. It often involves the misuse of funds, taking out loans, or controlling assets without the elderly person's consent.

Neglect by Caregivers: This includes the failure to provide basic needs such as food, hygiene, or medical care, especially in home settings.

Emotional and Psychological Abuse: This abuse often involves controlling assets or receiving benefits, making older adults targets for scams or exploitation by trusted individuals and loved ones. It is described as a recurring theme related to financial matters.

Ageism and Societal Attitudes: The cultural devaluation of elders can lead to neglect or a dismissal of their rights and needs. Abuse is often minimized or seen as a "private family matter."

Montgomery County, Ohio (in order of most common to least common)

Neglect by Caregivers: This is the most prevalent form of elder abuse in Montgomery County, Ohio. It includes the failure to provide food, hygiene, medical care, or consistent care for existing medical conditions, particularly among dependent seniors.

Self-Neglect: Many older adults who live alone are unable to care for themselves due to cognitive decline, isolation, or other mental health issues.

Financial Exploitation: This involves the misuse of funds, unauthorized asset transfers, or coercion, often by family members or trusted individuals. While this was the top concern in Franklin County, Ohio, it ranks third in Montgomery County, Ohio.

Emotional and Psychological Abuse: This includes verbal threats, intimidation, isolation, or manipulation that can erode the dignity and mental health of the elderly.

Physical Abuse: The provided text mentions physical abuse as the fifth concern but doesn't provide additional detail in the list.

Sexual Abuse: Unwanted or forced sexual contact is often hidden due to shame or cognitive impairments.

Medication Mismanagement: This can include overmedicating, withholding prescriptions, or misusing drugs or excessive sedation to control an elderly person's behavior.

Scams and Fraud by Strangers: Targeted phone, email, and door-to-door scams exploit the elderly, causing confusion and distrust.

Violations of Rights and Autonomy: This refers to denying elders the right to make their own decisions, access services, or live independently.

Abuse in Long-Term Care Facilities: Mistreatment due to understaffing, lack of oversight, or a lack of advocacy in nursing homes is also a concern.[23]

Pastor Dee Williams

Her testimony was not just compelling but deeply personal, leaving all participants in a moment of profound silence. Her words resonated with memories all share—mothers working tirelessly as domestics, commuting long distances to clean the homes of the affluent, feeding their own children, and maintaining their own homes.

Here lies the truth of upbringing for many African American people, a truth that binds us all together.

She also shared how her mother left her father and lost custody of her children. Her grandmother raised her, and she did not see her mother until she was twelve. Years

[23] "Elder Abuse-Part Two," presented by Teresa Johnson, Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach, Zoom Meeting – Week Seven: Session Seven, Columbus, OH, August 12, 2025.

later, when she grew up, she heard that the judge was mean to her mother. This question lingered in her mind, the judge asking, "How could she come back and take us from the grandmother?"[24] The judge was not aware of our family dynamics, what she was going through or why she left her children. Her story was never told or shared. In her presentation, she expressed the challenges children face in the court system and the challenges her grandmother faced in caring for her and her other siblings. So, when she referred to the project she is participating in, her memories provided insight into the Tuesday Senior Program in Dayton, Ohio.

Summary of Learnings

Pre- and Post-Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of questions pertaining to the gender and age group. The questions were:

1. What is your understanding of faith-based ministry and healing/health prayer?
2. Which people, in your opinion, will most benefit from healing/health prayer?
3. Could you explain why prayer is needed or not in helping people with life and spiritual struggles?
4. Would you like to be involved in faith-based ministry at some level, such as mediation, prayer team member, post-prayer, and pastoral care?
5. Explain why you are or are not interested in serving in the faith-based ministry.

[24] "Child Trauma and Family Dynamics," presented by Darice Jackson, Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach, Zoom Meeting – Week Seven: Session Seven, Columbus, OH, August 12, 2025.

6. On a scale of one to five (with one as not favorable and five as extremely advantageous), would you encourage the church to train people to be able to minister prayers to those afflicted by wounded spirits?

6a. Why did you choose the number you did?

7. Would you like to pray prayers over those who are misled and struggling with seeking God?

Data and Analysis Summary

For seven weeks, the doctoral project met on Tuesday evenings via Zoom from 6:30-8:30 p.m. The packet was sent out early to individuals about the project program, and by word of mouth. Attendance varied throughout the weeks, with eight people attending the first week. However, the second week two left due to other commitments. In the third week, ten people attended through word of mouth. They continued to sign in every Tuesday evening because of the job positions they hold. They believed that the information would help them in their job, mainly because they worked in institutions that served and treated senior citizens, drug addiction, alcoholism, and depression. Their roles in the community service were caregivers, nurses' aides, senior care centers, and social workers.

While I wished I could continue to hold this program at the Tuesday Prime Program in Dayton, Ohio, the administration's concerns for the seniors' well-being were valid. However, this does not deter me. Their concerns have motivated me to reach out to others serving the community, such as churches, caregivers, nurses' aides, senior care

centers, and social workers. I must expand our expectations for where this program can go and remain hopeful for its future growth and impact.

Pre- and Post-Questionnaire

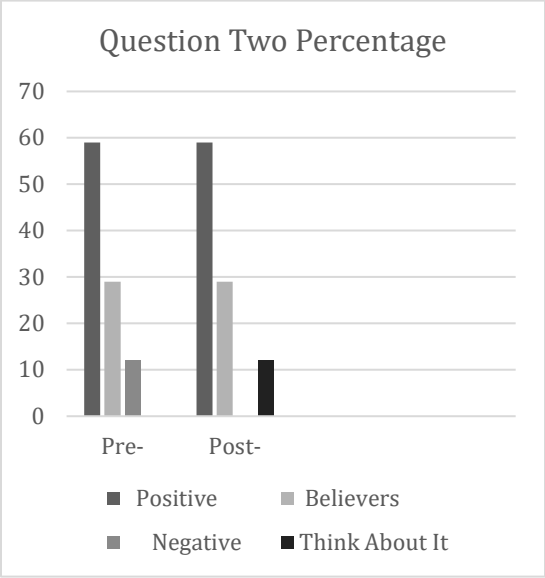
Question One (pre-questionnaire): What is your understanding of faith-based ministry and healing/health prayer?

Figure 2. Pre- and post-percentage graph for Question One

The answers to the first question varied. Some participants answered the question negatively, primarily because of prior negative experiences. The majority answered the first question positively, citing motivation by spirituality, participation in charitable activities, and faith-based spiritual initiatives that provide life-transforming guidance through Christ's love.

The post-questionnaire for Question One revealed a significant change in responses. The guest speakers' presentations and testimonies offered insight into how a faith-based ministry, prayer, and spiritual healing can benefit the seniors in the Tuesday Prime Program in Dayton, Ohio. The two participants who responded negatively later changed their minds. One stated that faith-based ministry and healing go hand in hand,

while the other was willing to give it a chance. There was a slight increase in positive responses to the post-questionnaire.



Data Results

This chart shows Pre-:
88% Positive Results
(59% Positive + 29% Believers)
12% Negative Results

The Post- Results show:
No Change in the Positive Results
12% Think About It

Figure 3. Pre- and post-questionnaire graph for Question Two with data results

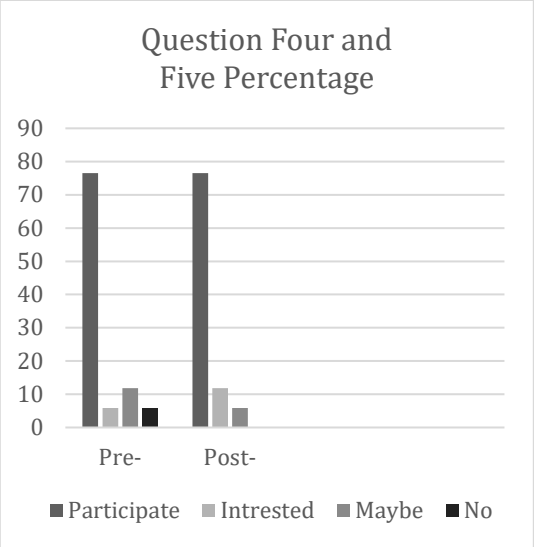
Question Two: Which people, in your opinion, will most benefit from healing/health prayer? In the pre- and post-questionnaires, ten participants answered, "Everyone will benefit from prayer," while two participants answered, "They will not benefit from prayer." Their response was negative. The other five participants expanded on their answers, responding like this:

"There may be some who have doubts, but for those who are interested, they will receive the word." "I believe healing and health prayer speak loudly to those of us who have reached a place of surrender where we become humble enough to admit we cannot fix everything alone, honest enough to name the anger and fear, and face the pain that we carry." "Prayer, in its strengthening power, can replace those life and spiritual struggles."

In the post-questionnaire, the two participants who answered negatively were in a holding pattern. Their answer moved toward a more positive perspective, showing interest in accepting prayer and spiritual healing. Although they hesitated about the benefits of this program, I felt the weekly sessions were slowly influencing them and would benefit from attending the program.

Question Three: Could you explain why prayer is needed or not in helping people with life and spiritual struggles? This question elicited many opinions that led to an understanding of prayer through fellowship, the strength of prayer, and faith, noting that prayer is essential because it connects to God. It provides a spiritual reset. Part of our conversation included an atheist who may not call it prayer and feel an aching silence where meaning ought to be. A few participants testified to how they had suffered most of their lives, and God never answered their prayers. God was not present in their lives, and they needed help.

Why doesn't God answer prayers the way we want Him to? Why does He say "No," leaving us to wonder why? Someone once told me it is not because He does not care. You may be asking for the wrong thing, the wrong reason, or you do not have enough faith. We are a society that is always running from one place to another, multitasking at the same time. It is difficult to take time to stop, be still, and truly listen to God's voice. Do not give up when God does not answer your prayers right away. Keep praying and seeking Him out in your life.



Data Results

This chart shows Pre-:
76.5% Participate
5.9% Interested
11.8 % Maybe
5.9% No

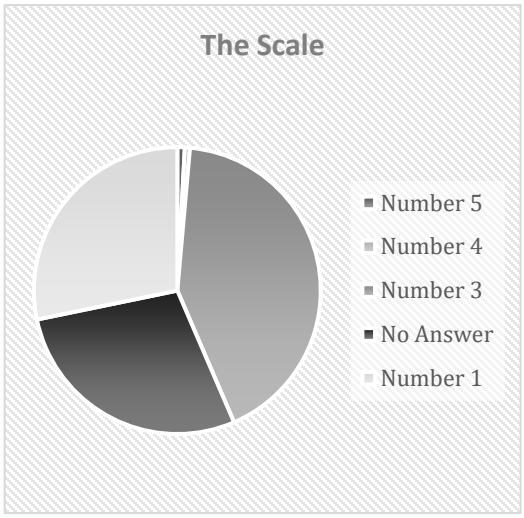
The Post- Results show:
76.5 % Participate
11.8 % Interested
5.9 % Maybe

Figure 4. Pre- and post-questionnaire graph for questions

Four and Five with Data Results

Questions Four and Five: Would you like to be involved in faith-based ministry at some level, such as mediation, prayer team member, post-prayer, and pastoral care? Explain why you are or are not interested in serving in a faith-based ministry.

For the most part, participants responded positively to questions four and five. Results show that most participants have been active members of a faith-based ministry for years. At the same time, the minority are so busy that they do not have time but are interested in participating at some point. One participant responded ‘no’ to the pre-questionnaire feedback and later answered ‘maybe’ to the post-questionnaire. I noticed that the two participants who gave negative responses at the beginning, both in the pre- and post-inquiry, were gradually starting to believe. Their answers reflected that they could overcome their doubts and act. In other words, they could stop running and begin to connect to God.



Data Results

The chart shows:
Number 1 … 11.8%
Number 3 … 17.6%
Number 4 … 24 %
Number 5 … 35%
No Answer . 11.8%

Figure 5. Pre- and post-questionnaire for Question Six with data results

Question Six: On a scale of one to five (with one as not favorable and five as extremely advantageous) would you encourage the church to train people to be able to minister prayers to those afflicted by wounded spirits? Question Six-a: Why did you choose the number you did?

Questions Six and Six-a are essential. It was my way of finding out where the participants are, especially as they approach the end of the program. I wanted to know whether they have any connection to a faith-based ministry and the church. Do they believe the church can train people to minister prayer? Results show that twelve thought that the Church could train people to minister prayer, while five participants said no, in short, saying the Church could do more. In the pre- and post-questionnaire, the answers stayed the same.

In Question Six-a, the participants explained why they felt the way they did. Some reflected on past church experiences. Others just outright expressed that the church should do more in the community and not wait for members to come to them. It is not

just preaching and worshipping in four walls, but using the gifts God has given the church to go into the community and share His grace, love, and mercy.

The pre- and post-answers for question Six-a were similar, with little change. Negative responses included comments such as, “There is much preaching but not teaching.” Another suggested that the church has lost its message. There was one that would not encourage it, at least not in a traditional sense. Her response was positive, but there was a twist. She lived through the kind of church experience that left deeper wounds than it healed. The strict doctrines, the judgment, the silencing of pain … those things did not lead her to God; they pushed her toward shame and confusion. She believes that prayer and spiritual healing should not be confined to four walls or led by someone with a title. A person can talk to God from a street corner, a hospital bed, or their own bathtub, and be just as heard and loved. Faith is not exclusive to a pulpit; it lives in the breath of the broken who choose to seek healing anyway. She also believes in training people to minister prayers, but not in a way bound by tradition. There are infinite ways to serve if we are brave enough to open our minds and remember Jesus’ way.

The results showed that five participants responded negatively. Twelve participants responded positively. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the participants voted a resounding yes to question Six-a. They believe that the church can train people to minister prayers within the community. There was a negative response of twenty-eight percent (28%).

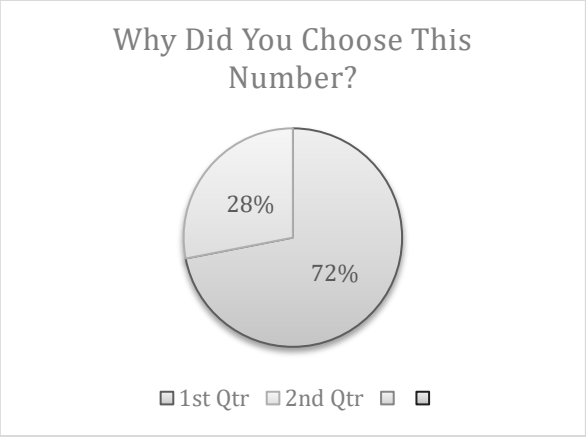


Figure 6. Pre- and post-questionnaire graph for Question Six-a

Question Seven: Would you like to pray for those who are misled and struggling with seeking God? This question gave us insight into whether the participants are willing to put themselves in uncomfortable situations. Are you comfortable praying with others who are struggling? The results show in the pre-questionnaire that thirteen participants gave a resounding yes, three answered no, and one gave no answer. In the post-questionnaire, fifteen replied with a yes, one returned with a no, and one provided no answer. I believe people can overcome their fears and doubts. People can, through the power of the Holy Spirit, break down the barriers that are create and become all that God asks.

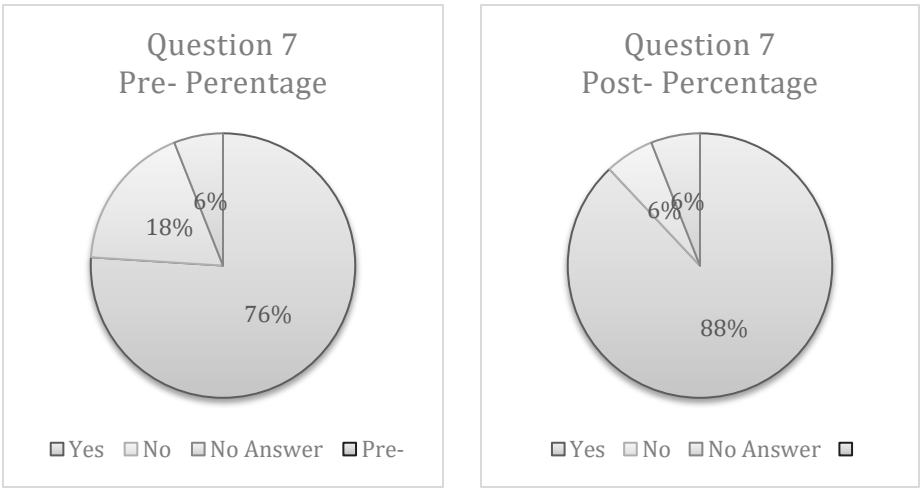


Figure 7. Pre- and post-questionnaire graph and data results

The chart shows a significant difference between the pre- and the post-questionnaire. There was an increase in participants who spoke favorably in the post-questionnaire (thirteen to fifteen). In addition, the decline among those who previously responded no in the pre-questionnaire was three to one. One participant spoke honestly. In her response, she answered no. In her effort to explain why, she would not pray over people simply because they appear misled or struggling with seeking God. The power of choice is one of the greatest gifts God ever gave us, and God will never snatch that away, even if we misuse it or fumble through the dark trying to find His way. If someone asks for prayer, I will honor that request. If I need prayer, I will ask. Another participant answered yes. She suggested letting God do the calling and letting her do the listening.

Major Findings

The content and context of this project, the passion of the speakers, and the personal testimonies presented in the seven weekly sessions touched many and inspired

everyone to share this information. One of the designated speakers suggested that the attendees continue meeting once a month, stay in touch, meet for lunch, and maybe even participate in a podcast that expands on the issues addressed, such as elder abuse, mental health, and women's rights. The significant findings validated the importance of this project program, delivered through the project's foundations (biblical, theological, historical, and interdisciplinary), thereby providing a comprehensive and holistic understanding of building a relationship with God. The consistent engagement with these foundations through speeches, presentations, and open dialogue led to tangible outcomes that increased understanding and successfully equipped seniors with the spiritual principles necessary to foster their relationship with God. The gradual immersion into the faith-based, twelve-step approach provided a structured path forward.

The Tear Session (Week Six): A session that ended in tears after an inspiring testimony underscored the project's emotional and relational success. This moment cemented a bond that gave birth to fellowship, communion, and unity, directly combating the isolation the project sought to address.

Final Summary and Impact (Week Seven): The final session provided a summary and overview, celebrating the impact of the Tuesday Senior Program and reinforcing the central role of prayer and God's presence in the participants' lives. This concluding reflection emphasized that transformation had indeed occurred among everyone who attended.

Part of my findings was to acknowledge the struggle and offer comfort and delve deep into the project's purpose, adding relevant information and powerful testimonies that acknowledged the importance of faith-based ministry and prayer. Everyone benefited

because all attendees face challenges affecting their mind, body, or spirit, finding peace, strength, and renewal by seeking God. The discussions, characterized by participants feeling comfortable enough to speak freely without reservation, encouraged active learning. The goal of having participants compliment, comment, connect, and question the presenters led to deeper understanding and a more substantial learning experience. The overall result was a thriving fellowship rooted in spiritual strength, fulfilling the project's mission to address the seniors' lack of spiritual knowledge and emotional isolation through a holistic, interdisciplinary, and faith-based community. The results were outstanding.

Conclusion

Creating a Model of Ministry

The goal of this project, Building a Relationship with God and Seniors through an Interdisciplinary Approach, is to serve as a successful and reproducible model for other church or community organizations seeking to address the spiritual and social isolation of the elderly. This project represents a testament to resilience and a culmination of my life's journey, which embodies the aspiration to remain a living example of strength, perseverance, and genuine empathy, continuing to provide the reliable and inspiring leadership that fellow seniors need.

The founder of the Salvation Army, General William Booth, and his wife, who moved away from traditional church methods, started on the streets of London, United Kingdom, and later traveled to the United States to preach to enslaved people in the fields.

His story is like the mustard seed that grew into a big plant. Jesus draws from the mustard plant. The significance of this plant comes from a small, insignificant beginning, like the Salvation Army. The parable of the mustard seed is a lesson for us: Huge things can happen from a little something. The model is presented as a complementary pathway for spiritual awakening and divine intervention, not professional or clinical therapy.

In retrospect, the successful implementation of the seven-week program and its profound impact on participants directly inform the project's future. The key next steps revolve around sustainability, expansion, and community embedding. The project faced initial ethical constraints that led to broadening its outreach beyond the Salvation Army. The future goal would be to intentionally expand this reach. Given the intense discussion in Week One about seniors' practical concerns (Medicare/Medicaid, food insecurity), the project's long-term aspiration would be to formalize its interdisciplinary approach by building stronger partnerships with social service agencies and the Salvation Army to offer referrals and tangible help, ensuring no one is too hungry or distressed to receive the spiritual message. Enhancing the existing seven-week training module into a formal, repeatable curriculum would ensure a successful interdisciplinary approach that covers biblical, historical, theological, and social aspects for future groups of seniors.

The seventeen individuals who attended all seven sessions provided a wealth of information crucial to the project's success. The project significantly enhanced the expertise and support of several key associates whose journey and encouragement were instrumental in the decision to pursue the Doctor of Ministry program, whose comprehensive guidance and moral support were a pivotal lifeline, and who provided invaluable insights on managing and communicating with the professional team. Their

dedication to attending and supporting this project significantly helped in weekly preparation. Learning through discussions and personal testimony magnified the projection design, making it open and unrestricted. Every session often went past the required time due to active participation. Participants were encouraged to compliment, comment, connect, and ask questions of the presenters. The sharing of personal testimonies, permeated with both joy and heartache, was a dynamic element that ultimately ended in a sigh of relief and served as acts of worship, creating a bond of fellowship and unity among attendees.

This project engaged a diverse group of individuals who provided a range of feedback for future research. What is my plan going forward? Because of their constant wealth of collaboration and partnership in the unrelenting task, I saw the potential to create a non-profit organization that would benefit seniors and support their families. I plan to build a 501(c)(3), a website, and circulate literature to encourage partnerships with this new organization. I look forward to working with the seniors and partnering with charitable agencies.

APPENDIX A

PROJECT FLYER

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND SENIORS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH ZOOM SESSIONS

Week One - Session One: July 1, 2025 @6:30-8:30pm
Speaker: Evangelist Jessica Finney – Biblical Foundation
Presentation Topic: Creating A Bridge With God

Week Two – Session Two: July 8, 2025 @ 6:30-8:30pm
Speaker: Rev. Carolyn Banks
Presentation Topic: My Personal Struggle: From Struggle To God's Purpose

Week Three – Session Three: July 15, 2025 @ 6:30-8:30pm
Speaker: Evangelist Jessica Finney – Historical Foundation
Speakers: Dr. Teresa Q Johnson
Presentation Topic: Elder Abuse (Part One)

Week Four – Session Four: July 22, 2025 @ 6:30-8:30pm
Speakers: Rev. Emma and Douglas Blacknell
Presentation Topic: Generational Trauma and Healing

Week Five – Session Five: July 29, 2025 @ 6:30-8:30pm
Speaker: Evangelist Jessica Finney – Theological Foundation
Speaker: Billy Mayfield
Presentation Topic: Psalm 100:5: "For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."

Week - Session Six: August 5, 2025 @ 6:30-8:30pm
Speaker: Evangelist Jessica Finney – Interdisciplinary Foundation
Speaker: Dr. Teresa Q
Presentation Topic: Elder Abuse (Part Two)

Week Seven – Session Seven: August 12, 2025 @ 6:30-8:30pm
Speakers: Brenda Middleton & Darice Jackson
Presentation Topic: Personal Growth and Wellbeing, and Spiritual Development

Convener (Host): Dr. Eshakhia Sobukwe
Any Questions, contact Evangelist Jessica Finney at: jfinney1@united.edu

Participation is voluntary * All denominations are welcome.

APPENDIX B

PERSONAL INVITATION

Personal Invitation

June 20, 2025

Jessica Finney
Doctrine of Ministry Program Candidate
United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH

Greetings,

Jessica Finney, a candidate of the Doctorate of Ministry, invites you to join and attend a six-week series on (PSALMS 27:1-14), titled **BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND SENIORS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH,** on July1,2025 that will begin promptly at (6:30 -8:30 pm).

Our objective is to address the problem context I hope to resolve, which is the seniors' lack of knowledge of how to build their relationship with God. The hypothesis is that if the seniors participate in a six-week training program, they will be equipped to build their relationship with God.

Attached is a flyer that includes the Zoom link, program itinerary from July 1-August 12, 2025, ministry covenant, and consent letter. We ask that you RSVP as soon as possible to confirm your attendance. Each session will open with an introduction, prayer, and devotion, followed by spokesperson presentations, Q and A sessions, a short discussion, and ending in prayer.

Your participation/presence would be greatly appreciated as your insights on the topic would be invaluable. Please confirm your attendance by asap. Looking forward to your positive response.

Grace and Peace,

Jessica Finney

Jessica Finney

Attachment: Personal Invitation
Ministry Flyer
Ministry Covenant
Consent Letter

APPENDIX C

GUEST SPEAKERS BIO

GUEST SPEAKERS BIO

Dr. Teresa Q. Johnson, Ph.D.

Dr. Teresa Q. Johnson, Ph.D., known as Dr. Q, is a transformative leader and advocate committed to resilience, empowerment, and social justice. As the founder and CEO of Empowerment for Growth and Reconstruction, Inc. (EGAR), she has dedicated over 30 years to supporting high-risk populations through addiction treatment, education, vocational training, and literacy improvement. With a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Social Change and extensive experience in urban education, she champions equity and restorative practices.

Her work as a motivational speaker, community volunteer, and former neighborhood commissioner focuses on addressing systemic challenges, untreated trauma, and recovery through her podcast, "Dr. Q. and You", and her book, "Let the Fun Begin". Through strategic leadership, empathy, and advocacy, Dr. Q continues to inspire transformation and uplift underserved communities.

Rev. Dr. Carolyn D. Banks

Rev. Dr. Carolyn D Banks **i**s a humble servant for our Lord and Savior, who attended Wilberforce University with a degree in Organizational Management. Also attended The Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

Dr. Banks has two masters from United Theological Seminary in Pastoral Theology and Christian Theology. Dr Banks also has a Doctorate degree from United Theological Seminary. She is Pastor of State Road United Methodist Church and Kids For Christ Ministry. To God be the Glory for all that He has done.

Billy Mayfield

Billy Mayfield is on course to complete the PH.D. in Criminal Justice core curriculum track at Walden University Online. A transplant from Chicago, Ill., currently residing in Dayton, OH. Now attending Wright State University in Dayton, where he received a master's in rehabilitation counseling. He also attended the University of Cincinnati, where he received a master's in criminal justice.

Mr. Mayfield has prior work experience in the field of substance abuse/mental health, counseling, and court-referred drug and alcohol offenders at a community-based correctional facility in OH. And presently a member of the Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church here in Dayton, serving under the ministry of Senior Pastor Samuel Winston, Jr. He enjoys singing, reading, researching, and writing.

Brenda A. Middleton

Brenda A. Middleton was born in Danville, Virginia, on October 2, 1951. The mother of 3. These are just a few of her many achievements.

She is certified in the State of Ohio as a LICDC-CS, and worked on call for several years at the Weekend Intervention Program in Greene County, 2 years at the Center of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (Montgomery County), and 45 years at Project Cure Inc., Dayton, Ohio.

- The supervisor for Outpatient Treatment Services for 11 years,
- Treatment Coordinator, and Co-Developer of Residential Treatment for 9 years.
- Intensive Outpatient Treatment Coordinator for the Women's Set Aside Treatment Program for 3 years.
- Intake/Assessment Counselor ,
- Pre-Certification Counselor.
- Senior Counselor and Drug Court Liaison for 15 yrs.
- University of Dayton and Dayton Public Schools health classes on substance abuse...and more.

Pastor Emma and Douglas Blacknell

Pastor Emma and Douglas Blacknell, founders of the Virtuous New Life Ministries, are located on 127 Market Street in Brookville, OH. The ministry is dedicated to serving individuals and families by meeting both spiritual and practical needs. They provide a welcoming environment for worship, prayer, and spiritual growth, while also offering programs that strengthen communities through outreach, education, and support services. From youth and family development to community assistance and empowerment initiatives, the ministry's goal is to inspire hope, build faith, and equip people to thrive in every area of life.

Darice Ramona Jackson

Darice Ramona Jackson, an Evangelist Missionary, was born on August 16, 1955, in Newark, NJ. She is a U. S. Army veteran who relocated to Trotwood, OH in 1996. Soon after moving to Ohio, she was hired by United Theological Seminary and worked there for 26 years, retiring in 2021. She is also a licensed Minister who serves on the ministerial staff at Gateway Cathedral Church of God in Christ in Trotwood, Ohio.

APPENDIX D

WEEKLY TWO HOUR SESSIONS

WEEKLY TWO HOUR SESSIONS

Week Before Session One

- Prepare packets for all attending
- Send emails to all potential participants
- Confirm speaker presentations and dates
- Set up Zoom meetings

Week One Zoom Session

- Open with prayer
- Ice Breaker - Everyone introduces themselves to each other
- Introduction - Who are you?
- Talk about the project: Who, what, when, where, how, and why?
- Ask if attendees have concerns about participating
- Set the ground rules
- Talk about the participants' and the speakers' responsibilities
- Stress the importance of confidentiality
- Reinforce that participation is voluntary, with no repercussions if they withdraw from the project
- Make sure each participant has completed the forms in the packet and returned them to me; Email any additional forms as required.
- Wrap up with questions and end the session.

Week Two Zoom Session

- Open with prayer
- Answer any questions
- 60-minute presentation - Biblical Foundation (Ps. 27:1-14)
- 15-minute Q and A session
- Wrap up
- Close with prayer

Week Three Zoom Session

- Open with prayer
- 5-10-minute recap of the Biblical Foundation presentation
- Question: Has anyone thought about questions from last week?
- 60-minute presentation - Historical Foundation
- 15-minute Q and A session
- Wrap up
- Close with prayer

Week Four Zoom Session

- Open with prayer
- 5-10-minute recap of Historical Foundation presentation
- 60-minute presentation - Theological Foundation
- 15-minute Q and A session followed by open discussion
- Wrap up
- Close with prayer

Week Five Zoom Session

- Open with prayer
- 5-10-minute recap of the Theological Foundation presentation
- 60-minute presentation – Interdisciplinary Foundation
- 15-minute Q and A
- Open discussion
- Wrap up
- Close with prayer

Week Six Zoom Session

- Open with prayer
- 5-10-minute recap of the Interdisciplinary Foundation and survey
- Closing speaker presentation with volunteers and helpers
- Question: Where do we go from here?
- Promote group discussion, thus inviting everyone to participate – do not rush!
- Wrap up
- Close with prayer

Week Seven Zoom Session

- Open with prayer
- Proceed with any housekeeping
- What have you learned? How has these weekly session affected your life?
- Open discussion (everyone is invited to participate)
- Wrap up and close with prayer
- Close with prayer

APPENDIX E

GROUP COVENANT

Project Covenant

This covenant allows us to develop a relationship and fellowship with God's help through our individual and mutual commitment. This covenant will assist us as group members in achieving the goals of identity, communication, love, and compassion and to guide us in our joint commitment to one another as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. We agree to abide by the following covenants:

1. I agree to accept you. I may not agree with your attitude or action, but I will receive you as God's child and do all I can understand. I need you; we need each other.

2. I agree to give my time, energy, and insight if you need them.

3. I will allow each group member to share without interruption.

4. I agree to be open and honest, listen actively, and hear what you say.

5. I will reflect on what I hear you say and what you are feeling. I suppose this means risking pain for either of us. In that case, I trust our relationship enough to take the risk. I will express this feedback sensitively, in keeping with the circumstances.

6. I agree that each member should be encouraged to share what they think without judgment, and

7. I promise never to divulge anything shared within this group in confidence outside this group. I will keep any shared information within the group and not gossip.

8. I will cultivate ways to serve other group members and ways to reach out and serve the community around us.

In accepting this covenant, I sign my name in recognition of my commitment to God and the members of this group. I shall keep this document as a reminder of this voluntary covenant I have entered into on this date.

_____
_____
Signature Date
(Your signature is for your own commitment; you retain this document.)

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